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Fish & Wildlife News: January 1999 (Special Edition: National Wildlife Refuge System Conference)

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Fish & Wildlife News

Special Edition: National Wildlife Refuge System Conference

January 1999

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Participants Keep Energy Level on High

It was a meeting that Theodore Roosevelt himself might have relished, coming 95 years after he created America's very first wildlife refuge, on tiny Pelican Island off the coast of Florida.

For the very first time since the inception of the National Wildlife Refuge System in 1903, representatives of all 516 refuges, 38 wetland management districts with their thousands of waterfowl production areas and representatives from every other Service program came together under a single roof.

The reason: to talk about the system—what it should be in the future, what it should attempt immediately, how refuges should relate to people, what the system should expect of Service leadership, and what the future holds for wildlife and for the 93 million acres that comprise the world's largest network of public lands devoted exclusively to wildlife.

The air was thinner at 9,500 feet and nearly all of the 800 delegates, stakeholders and non-government organization representatives to the National Wildlife Refuge System Conference in Keystone, Colorado, could feel a difference, but it only seemed to add an electric energy to a historic moment.

If less oxygen at high altitudes can mean a degree of lightheadedness, it can also mean less resistance; that may have accounted for the energy level of the Keystone conferees as they pushed through four days, 22 meetings, four keynote addresses, and at least 11 hours of intense and sometimes highly technical discussions in breakout sessions that took on the conference's four principal concerns: wildlife, habitat, people and leadership.

Participants also listened intently and enthusiastically to a dozen more panels, presentations, reflections, summaries and observations, and took in two corridors full of exhibits that told various program stories.

It was a conference where even a partial list of keynote speakers evoked America's history, be it the turn of the century—Theodore Roosevelt IV, great-grandson of the President (“On behalf of all Americans, I offer you our deep respect and gratitude”), or more recent history—such as the inspirational Lynn Greenwalt, Service Director from 1974-1981 (“We're here to save dirt!”).

Other speakers embodied the present—from Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt (“As long as I am Secretary of the Interior, I will use every resource available to insure that no road is built through Izembek”) to media mogul and conservationist Ted Turner (“If we don't have a healthy environment, we don't have a healthy human race”). Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark personified the enthusiasm of the moment itself (“This gathering has clearly been a resounding success!”).

There was plenty of work: delegates almost immediately went to work in breakout sessions—the small group discussions spanning 11 hours over two days. Their assignment was to further hone the second draft of a document called *Fulfilling the Promise*, which will eventually set a course for the refuge system in those four key areas—*wildlife, habitat, people and leadership*—as the system moves to its 100th anniversary in 2003, and beyond.

Conference planners handed the delegates a full plate. Among their objectives:

- Determine how to foster an increased understanding of how the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System relates to the mission of the Service.
- Develop a strengthened and reaffirmed vision for the refuge system that focuses on wildlife, habitat and people through renewed and lasting leadership.

- Create specific recommendations to reach and sustain that vision and develop a process of accountability for long-term implementation of those recommendations.

- Deepen the understanding that even greater benefits to wildlife conservation can be achieved through the synergy of national wildlife refuges operating together as a system with support and involvement from other Service programs.

- Increase awareness that strengthening the integrity of the National Wildlife Refuge System assures these synergistic benefits and enhances the standing of each individual refuge in the system and the Service.

- Increase understanding of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 and achieve unity and commitment for the consistent application of emerging policy and regulations.

- Generate support for the National Wildlife Refuge System by Service employees, Department of the Interior leadership, conservation organizations and the public.

- Promote a heightened sense of *esprit de corps* resulting in improvements to the National Wildlife Refuge System as it approaches and goes beyond its centennial in 2003.

The recommendations and revisions that addressed these areas will be placed in the final draft of *Fulfilling the Promise*, to go to the Service Directorate by March 1999. Once finalized, the Service will begin the implementation process, under guidance from a team headed by Dan Ashe, Assistant Director for Refuges and Wildlife. (See story elsewhere in this issue)

Ken Burton, Public Affairs,
Washington, DC

The National Wildlife Refuge System Conference held in October in Keystone, Colorado, was special and historic, its participants enthusiastic.

Never in the 95-year history of the National Wildlife Refuge System had anyone attempted to bring representatives of all 516 refuges under a single roof — not to mention other Fish & Wildlife Service people from dozens of programs, interested partners and distinguished guests. We didn't realize how extraordinary it had been until a planned four-page special insert in the *Fish & Wildlife News* suddenly turned into a 32-page special edition.

We hope you enjoy this tribute to America's magnificent National Wildlife Refuge System.

Below and sprinkled throughout this special Fish & Wildlife News, you will find comments from both Service employees and members of conservation organizations who attended the Keystone conference.

“The Keystone refuge conference was one of the most impressive professional conferences I’ve ever attended. The speakers were inspiring and the level of excitement among the participants was palpable throughout the entire week. The organizers of the event should be given high marks for their efforts.”

Margaret Kolar, Manager, San Francisco Bay Refuge Complex, San Francisco, California

On the Cover:

Okefenokee NWR, Georgia. Photo by Joe Doherty, USFWS.

“I can honestly say that it was the best conference I have ever attended. In addition to being productive [and] a great opportunity for reconnecting and networking, it was extremely meaningful and actually inspirational.”

Stephen B. Moore, Chief, Division of Refuge Operations Support, Portland, Oregon



Nisqually NWR, Washington State. Photo: Debbie McCrensky.

Motivational Video Inspires Conferencegoers



Yesterday, today and... *In this video, produced especially for the Keystone conference, Division Chief Rick Coleman looks at refuge system "heroes" of the past and predicts a bright future. USFWS photo.*

Following is the script from a seven-minute video, "Fulfilling the Promise of the National Wildlife Refuge System," developed by the Division of Refuges in Washington, D.C., to kick off the Refuge System Conference.

The script was inspired by Rodney Kroegel, son of the first refuge manager, Paul Kroegel. In the Spring of 1997, Rodney told his father's story to Refuges Division Chief Rick Coleman during a celebration to unveil a commemorative statue of Paul Kroegel near Pelican Island, the refuge he oversaw back in the early 1900s.

{Scene: Pelican Island at sunrise.}

{Refuges Chief Rick Coleman on camera from boat offshore the island.} This is where it all began nearly 100 years ago, on a tiny island thriving with pelicans, herons, and egrets on Florida's Indian River. The birthplace of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Just a snapshot of what would become a vast network of special wildlife habitats all across the nation.

{Collage of refuge shots from across the country.}

{Rick on camera at Kroegel statue.} You can barely see Pelican Island from here, across the Indian River lagoon. We're at a statue commemorating Paul Kroegel, our first refuge manager.

{Voiceover. Historical shots of Kroegel and bird plume products} Paul was a shipbuilder near here, along the Indian River. He witnessed the destruction of pelicans and other wading birds by so many plume

hunters who slaughtered them to supply the fashion industry's demand for a few feathers. It was a tense time in the early 1900s. Game laws were practically non-existent. Two of Paul's friends were killed trying to protect birds. Every day while Paul was building his boats, he kept an eye out. He looked across the river toward Pelican Island and saw the birds flare up as they do when they're disturbed. And he knew then that they were in harm's way.

{Rick on camera at statue.} Paul would then get in a sailboat—a sailboat—and head across the river trying to get there as fast as he could to protect those birds. He used all he had—his sailboat and a double-barrel 10-gauge shotgun—to help them out.

{Rick on camera in boat offshore Pelican Island.} Think about it: Paul saw disturbance to wildlife and he dropped everything to sail to protect it.

You do that every day.

{Voiceover. Shots of Service employees at work.} You put your lives on the line the same way Paul Kroegel did. Your families and friends make tremendous sacrifices to support you. For Paul, sometimes sailing to the island was easy. He had a good wind from the right direction, and he got there real quick. Sometimes the wind was against him and he had to tack back and forth, and back and forth, to get there. But he never gave up. He always got to Pelican Island.

{Continue voiceover. Historical pictures of [father of the Duck Stamp] "Ding" Darling, cartoons, refuges purchased with Duck Stamp funds} This same spirit charged other great refuge heroes, like "Ding" Darling, who used the power of the pen to raise America's consciousness about the vast destruction of wetlands. He designed the blue goose emblem that graces national wildlife refuge signs across the country. Like Paul, he used his ingenuity to protect birds and other wildlife: he jump started the Federal Duck Stamp program.

{Continue voiceover. Photo of [former refuge manager] J. Clark Salyer, WPA and wetlands footage.} And J. Clark Salyer, who drove around the prairies in a station wagon during the Dust Bowl Days, hand-picking wetlands to protect dwindling ducks and

geese. He was a strong advocate for the growth of the refuge system through his years of service.

{Continue voiceover. Photos of Rachel Carson} Rachel Carson, like Paul Kroegel, stood virtually alone. Her visits to refuges inspired some of her most eloquent prose. She was among the first to describe how refuges fit into the bigger picture of ecosystem conservation. Her landmark book, *Silent Spring*, pointed out the harmful effects of contaminants on wildlife and people. Because of this, she faced tremendous adversity from corporate interests who not only questioned her research...but also her character. But she stood her ground.

{Rick on camera on Pelican Island.} Many challenges are the same for you today. Like it was for Paul Kroegel and the others. Sometimes it's easy. Sometimes the winds are with you and you get there quick. But more often you have to tack back and forth before you reach your goal...to protect the resources. But you get there.

Like Paul Kroegel, "Ding" Darling, J. Clark Salyer, and Rachel Carson, your commitment is absolute...your perseverance unwavering...your passion for wildlife etched across your hearts.

{Rick on camera at Pelican Island.} For our first gathering, we come together at a time when the National Wildlife Refuge System is at a crucial crossroads. You're taking a look at what the refuge system has been...but more importantly you're uniting to make decisions about what it can become.

{Voiceover. Clinton signing organic law, volunteer helping on refuge.} Today, the opportunities for the National Wildlife Refuge System are enormous. You no longer have to stand alone. You've got support Paul Kroegel and the others never even dreamed of. *{Rick on camera at Pelican Island.}* Favorable winds are guiding you. The challenge to all of us is to make the most of these winds...to take that simple promise started by one man with one boat...and use it to fulfill the full promise of what the National Wildlife Refuge System can become.

{Wildlife collage to go with musical finale.}

"...You are Doing the Right Thing"

Congressman David Skaggs of Colorado, first elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1976, retired at the end of the 105th Congress. At the Keystone meeting. He was presented with a plaque honoring his long-time support of the Service mission and his work on behalf of Service resources in the Mountain-Prairie Region, headquartered in Denver. Skaggs also received a framed photograph of himself with a Swainson's hawk, taken at Two Ponds NWR.

Following are remarks he gave as he accepted the award.

One of our nation's most imaginative, forward-looking decisions was establishing a system of wildlife refuges. The value of that decision by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1903 is becoming ever more clear with today's increased population, automobile and development intrusions, and demand on our recreation and consumable resources, and the intense pressures those things put on our wild places.

Even someone so sensitive to the natural world as Teddy Roosevelt couldn't have foreseen that his first bold action to protect Florida's tiny Pelican Island would be so important and would lead to so many more such preserves.

His enthusiasm and his actions, even without specific legal authorization, were met with such popular support that he had to go on.... Roosevelt promptly designated fifty more [refuges]. By the way, I'd sooner have given him a posthumous Medal of Honor for his environmental work, than—as we did two weeks ago—for the charge up San Juan Hill!

Now that network of wildlife refuges has grown by a factor of ten. Over 500 refuges and [waterfowl] production areas, ranging in size from a few acres to one in Alaska of nearly 20 million acres, now bless, serve and help preserve key lands in every one of the fifty states, a total of nearly 93 million acres.

Close to my home, we are proud to boast Two Ponds National Wildlife Refuge, a small but habitat-rich spot of some forty acres, perhaps most significant for being completely surrounded by dense suburban development. On each of my visits to Two Ponds, I have enjoyed the instant response that comes from being in such a wild and natural place...



A friend of the system. *Retiring U.S. Representative David Skaggs told conference participants that some of his most rewarding experiences in Congress helped in the "preservation of our wild places." Photo by Ryan Hagerty.*

It's heartening to know that similar refuges are scattered throughout our country and that similar experiences are being enjoyed by thousands of hunters, birdwatchers, hikers and schoolchildren.

And it's just as heartening to know that such a dedicated, skilled and knowledgeable cadre of professional wildlife agents is on the job in those special places.... Thank you for all [of] your efforts, professional and personal, that make this system work.

During my almost twelve years in Congress, easily the most tangible and rewarding experiences that I have enjoyed are those involving preservation of our wild places. Whether through legislation to designate wilderness and other preserves or through work on funding appropriations to help acquire key habitat for public ownership and protection, I love learning about these places, visiting them, and leaving a new level of protection for them that will endure long beyond my efforts....

In particular I was pleased to support legislation that set the path toward transforming the Rocky Mountain Arsenal east of Denver into one of the nation's premier wildlife refuges. The toxic waste cleanup work there, coupled with parallel work by the Fish & Wildlife Service in protecting habitat and enhancing visitor

experience, is making a remarkable transformation in one of the most polluted spots we know....

As a member of the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, I have been pleased to work with you to accomplish several other Fish & Wildlife Service requests for funding to complete purchases and land exchanges that protect refuge lands and important habitat....

We were also successful in securing extra funds to expand enforcement efforts in this region to clean oil well sites that were killing hundreds of migratory birds and their predators. This bold operation...is now being used as a model for other regions and for other enforcement needs....

Finally, just last week Congress approved legislation...to allow the Service to keep the proceeds from selling selected confiscated and abandoned animal parts and products. This will help reduce the cost of storing these materials and will help fund important wildlife protection and education programs....

Also during this Congress we approved the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act, which [is] the primary subject of your meeting this week. I know that the final version of the act was carefully negotiated with the intention to be fair and helpful to the cause of protecting wildlife while accommodating some human use. I hope that these negotiations were successful from your perspective and that this law will assist your work....

In all [of] this work that I have undertaken in Congress, my efforts really have been the reflection and implementation of your work. The research, insights, field work and negotiations in which you engage every day are the bedrock of this crucial and worthy cause. Truly, I've been especially proud of the work we've done together because we've *done it together*....

Yours is a noble and difficult calling. I congratulate you on your good service and on your patience born of knowing that you are doing the right thing.

Thank you again for this opportunity to visit with you and for your good work.

"Put the Pedal to the Metal," Media Mogul Advises



Advocate for wildlife. "Wildlife is first, second and third," said Ted Turner. Photo by Ryan Hagerty.

Media tycoon Ted Turner advised delegates to the National Wildlife Refuge System Conference in Keystone, Colorado, to "work hard and put the pedal to the metal. If we don't have a healthy environment, we don't have a healthy human race."

Turner, vice chairman of Time Warner Inc. and overseer of the corporation's Cable Networks Division, is an ardent environmentalist who devotes a large share of his time and his personal fortune to a wide range of conservation efforts in both North and South America. He recently donated \$1 billion to the United Nations for global conservation programs.

Turner said on his own land—a million acres in the Western Hemisphere—he has three self-imposed rules: "Wildlife is first, second and third."

In the Western Hemisphere, Turner said, "we have some environment left, but it's going fast. In China, there is no environment left. It's gone."

"The environment is not something separate. It's something we can't live without. If we don't have a healthy environment, we don't have a healthy human race. [But] we're going to win in the end," Turner said, "because the smart people 'get it,' that without an environment there is no human race. [And] on our side, we have the smart people."

Turner said the real culprit to environmental problems is the human race and said governments must eventually address population. Without such a focus, Turner predicted thousands of people will eventually die by starvation or disease, "a terrible way to go."

"I like what John F. Kennedy said when we sent men to the moon—that we choose to send a man to the moon and do the other things not because they are easy, but because they are hard," Turner said.

Ken Burton, Public Affairs, Washington, DC



Babbitt Takes Tough Stance on Refuge Roads



Friend in high places. Secretary Bruce Babbitt pledged to allow no more roads through refuges. Photo by Ryan Hagerty.

"As long as I am Secretary of the Interior," Bruce Babbitt told delegates to the Keystone conference, "I will use every resource available to insure that no road is built through Izembek [National Wildlife Refuge]."

Roads—and the continued absence of them on wildlife refuges—were part of Secretary Babbitt's tough message. He left no doubt where he stood.

"You have to draw the line somewhere," the secretary said. "Roads are the single most destructive agent" in pristine areas. They can bring degradation and run counter to having any place remain sacrosanct, he said.

"We don't need another road in the entire National Wildlife Refuge System," Secretary Babbitt said to thunderous applause. He said refuges should maintain the roads that already exist, but no new roads are necessary.

The Secretary also urged the delegates to find ways to extend the conservation message to private landowners, who own the majority of wildlife habitat in the United States—lest refuges "become isolated islands in a sea of degradation." With that scenario, he said, America will see huge losses in biodiversity.

Secretary Babbitt pointed to South Florida as a leader with an ecosystem restoration project that promises to restore the health of the Everglades. In this program and in the successful habitat conservation plans in the endangered species program, a national wildlife refuge "is at the core, and that's gone virtually unnoticed," he said.

"Go Forward and Save Dirt," Exhorts Former Director Lynn Greenwalt

I thought a bit about the prospect of looking at 600 or so national wildlife refuge people and the prospect seemed, based on my experiences, a grisly one. But this is fairly benign. You are neat and well-ordered and it's delightful to be here. You're a little faded away because the lights have been put down to make it romantic and intimate, and I will try to keep it that way.

I have with me my wife, who has been with me for 40 years at these kinds of things. She's very good at maintaining my decorum when I'm away from home. Last night, we stopped in Dillon to eat supper and a number of you were kind enough to stop by and introduce yourselves to me and were kind enough to say who you were, as I had no idea. The anonymity that comes with the passage of years is sometimes very useful, although I discovered it doesn't work on my part.

I do want to talk to you a little bit about the culture of the refuge system and its relationship to the Fish & Wildlife Service because it has changed dramatically and almost beyond belief. I suspect some of you know that I'm a second generation refuge person. My father began this noble trade in the 1920s in Nevada, and I grew up hearing him talk about the things that went on in those remarkable times. I grew up in a household in which famous predecessors in the Fish & Wildlife Service and the refuge system were at my mother's dining table quite often. Why not? There was no place else to go.

The world was not full of Marriotts and other places to drive into if you traveled in those days, so it was my delight to see [former Service Director] Ira Gabrielson, for example, put up birds on my mother's kitchen table. And if any of you have ever seen pictures of him, you know he was a corpulent man. He had very stubby fingers. And as an 8 or 9-year-old, I remember marveling at how deft he was, putting up birds, with those small, stubby fingers.



Save the what? *It all came down to one thing for former Director Lynn Greenwalt: saving the dirt. Photo by Ryan Hagerty.*

I can remember [Refuge Manager] J. Clark Salyer. A trencherman, he was. He couldn't get enough to eat. He kept my mother working hard in the kitchen. I can recall as well, sitting on the lawn and hearing him lecture about astronomy. That was a time when people were different and though the times were different, the challenges were very much the same, but on a much lower level and a lesser scale, perhaps.

It was a time, my father told me, when the limit for expenditures without approval of the central office was \$50. A princely sum in those days, but nonetheless kind of a problem. It was a leisurely life, because one did not often communicate with the central office except by telegraph, and almost never by telephone, so there was use of that long-gone communication device, the letter. Typewritten communication.

It was a time when people knew each other rather well because there were so few of them. And it became a kind of family. People knew each other because there were so few of them and there was this unique relationship they had. Wives and children were involved for reasons of the sort I just described. There was a companionship that was remarkable to behold but disappeared over time because of the enlargement of the system, and of the Service and its responsibilities altogether.

But I can remember my youth on Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge as a remarkable panoply of things that unfolded over time. I remember the Civilian Conservation Corps, which gave way to the Youth Conservation Corps and the Job Corps. I remember at Wichita Mountains watching German prisoners of war, members of General Rommel's *Afrika Korps*, mowing lawns and fixing roads and repairing buildings. None of you will ever see anything like that.

I remember the beginning of public use, when it was kind of a miraculous thing: people liked to come to these places—what do we do with them? How do we deal with them? Then there came into being a little change, the first change that brought forth some real heroes in land management and recreational management. These were the first people who used the first tenuous authority they had found in statutes to control public use.

Imagine the trepidation the first time somebody promulgated regulations for motorboats on Havasu Lake in Arizona and had to go tell somebody, "Don't do that." And wondering if there were, in fact, teeth in that admonition. A man named Lou Hatch may have been one of the first to do that. A man whose name may be long gone now and forgotten—but it shouldn't be, because he was one of those heroes.

There are lots of those heroes, and I will not apologize for mentioning my father, who fought a lonely battle at Wichita Mountains for a long time. He fought, first, to keep a TV tower off the top of a large mountain and secondly, and more important, to keep the military from subsuming a piece of land that had existed as a refuge before the state of Oklahoma became a state. He did that without much help, and with great courage in my judgement. And as some of you know, there is no TV tower on Wichita Mountain. The military did not subsume the land.

continued on next page

Former Director Lynn Greenwalt Lauds Refuge Managers

(continued)

I know another minor hero, now gone, named Cunningham. Among other things, he had the good sense to let me carry away his daughter—and he was very generous in that regard. But he also went to a place called Loxahatchee in Florida and arm wrestled with the Corps of Engineers about who should get what share of water for Everglades kites and other creatures of that ilk.

The culture of heroes, the kinds of things that happened to refuges and to the Service, began a long time ago. And it has been characterized by change, some changes not very pleasant to contemplate, in retrospect.

I can recall vividly meeting with refuge managers from other regions when I was a lowly beginning assistant manager, only to discover it was easy to believe that they worked for some other agency. There was no similarity in any respect, except that we worked on refuges, between what I did in my region and what he did in his region. That was kind of a waste of potential and energy that has, I think, been overcome, but it was one of those cultural things that developed and was recognized eventually and done away with.

It was possible to go from a duty station in Cherokee, Oklahoma, to someplace in South Texas but it was unlikely you would go from Oklahoma to somewhere in Wisconsin because it wasn't done. You didn't take these foreigners into your bosom because who knows what virus they might infect the organization with.

Times have changed and it's important they do. You've come here, this group of you, to do something that's never been done before—to gather together and to talk about the future of the refuge system and what its relationship to the Fish & Wildlife Service should be. You will recognize around you the remarkable change that has gone on in the past 20 or 30 years. You will be given an opportunity to help define changes that will occur in the future.

You will discover, if you haven't already, there is a body of people called the Fish & Wildlife Service whose principal aim in life is to protect wild places and the creatures that live therein.

As a colleague of mine used to say a great many years ago, rather impressively, "We're here to save dirt, and if it doesn't save dirt, why are we doing it?" It may not be that simple, but the premise, the philosophy, the theology, is perhaps apt.

You will discover, if you haven't already, there is a body of people called the Fish & Wildlife Service whose principal aim in life is to protect wild places and the creatures that live therein.

Times that changed with that raft of acronyms that came along. EPA, ESA, NEPA, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act—and all the other things—have altered the relationship of this society to its environment, and that includes the wild places and the creatures that live therein. And you have an obligation and a responsibility to meet that challenge, because it's the only game in town.

One of the things I enjoy and marvel at—and it breaks my heart—is the presence of deer in my backyard...munching and observing. They care not whether it's day or night, and they are marvelous to behold because they should not be there. We are taking over where they should be, and the gentle rustle, the ripple, the sound of development in my part of the world, threatens to eclipse the gentle roar of Interstate 270 that goes by three miles away.

I can step outside and almost every morning, geese fly overhead. It's not the same thing as a morning 30 years ago on a shore where I listened to 250,000 Canada geese greeting the day. And I will never forget that remarkable experience. My geese are going from an IBM office park to a little sedimentation pond. And they will never leave. They are not the same. But they are what people have come to recognize as their wildlife neighbors. And sometimes they dislike them heartily. Times have changed.

I want to leave you with one admonition, however, and it's one I take very, very seriously. Because you are operating very much as a baseball pitcher will do in the next several days. The people who came before you in the Fish & Wildlife Service and in the refuge system set you up for the next inning. They worked hard. They overcame obstacles. They created precedents. They created the things that you have to work with.

And it is your obligation to take those things and move forward with the opportunities presented for you in a way that does not denigrate, dilute or diminish in the slightest degree that which came before you, because many thousands of men and women gave their careers and some even gave their lives for what you are working toward—saving dirt. Saving the opportunity for our grandchildren—and I have some—to be able to see the things I have seen and that you have seen.

To let them be able know that they can convey these miracles and marvels to their children and grandchildren: that is your role. How you do it is now up to you. But it is your responsibility to do it. It is your responsibility to assume the leadership role and go forward and save dirt. Young friends—I can say that because you are all younger than I and because of who and what you are, you are all my friends—my young friends, I cannot imagine better hands into which to place this responsibility, or a better climate in which the responsibilities will be carried out. It's up to you.

Those of us who have been there have stood our watch, well or poorly or indifferently, but our watch has passed. It is your turn. Ladies and gentlemen, I wish I was young again, because I would be joining you. Thank you very much.

Strengthening Organizational Vitality Through a Diverse Workforce: A Panel Discussion

Dean Rundle, San Diego NWR, California

Diversity: Our Legacy of Leadership

I feel very humble and honored to be talking to every refuge manager in the National Wildlife Refuge System. In my professional career, nothing will eclipse the honor and privilege of being one of you, a national wildlife refuge manager.

I invested a lot of energy in this conference since last January as a member of the leadership working group.... Leadership is about doing the right things, and leadership is all about people. As I thought about managing a diverse work force in the second hundred years of the refuge system, it... became clear that managing workforce diversity is the right thing to do, that since it is all about people, the diversity is all about leadership....

Compared to the other folks up here, I still consider myself pretty much a trainee refuge manager. But I am on the down side of 30 years and as I think about what difference I can make in a refuge career, it boils down to one thing—people. Few of us will ever make any great breakthrough in wildlife management techniques or be responsible for some new biological theorem that will change the course of wildlife conservation in America. The only thing most of us will do that makes a lasting mark on the refuge system is hire and mentor a bunch of folks. For myself and most of us, our legacy is those folks we bring up in refuges—the 15 to 20 or 50 people that we recruit and train over the course of a career to carry on taking care of the land when we are gone and forgotten.

If we do the right thing, and take our leadership roles seriously, a diverse workforce of talented and dedicated refuge folk will be our leadership legacy.

Someone told me in recent weeks that where they come from in the Service, “diversity” means “white males need not apply.” That is wrong. Diversity values people who look like me and Larry as much as it values Maggie,



Listen up. Members of the Diversity panel, left to right, Mamie Parker, Maggie Anderson, Jerome Ford and Dean Rundle. USFWS photo.

Mamie and Jerome. From a leadership perspective, managing workforce diversity is about getting lots of viewpoints, opinions, backgrounds and perspectives on our staff—those differences that, when energized by a common love of the land make us so much better at accomplishing our mission. We simply cannot do a very good job at taking care of land and wildlife for the American people if we all look and think alike—we’ll never develop good sets of courses of action, and we’ll lack innovation produced by diverse ideas.

This really came home to me when in 1996 I moved to California. My staff at San Diego NWR was diverse when I got there and as it has grown, we have maintained and expanded the diversity of our workforce. And I’m not talking about just diversity in gender, race and ethnicity. I’m also talking about white guys who don’t hunt and fish and lots of people who don’t eat meat.

We could never meet the challenges of growing new national wildlife refuges in the politically and ecologically complex environment of San Diego without lots of ideas from lots of people with different perspectives. We could not do our mission... could not connect with our diverse public customers if everybody looked and thought like I do.

The lesson for me is don’t be afraid to bring a city kid to a rural refuge, or hire a farmer’s daughter on a big city refuge. Don’t be afraid



Words of wisdom. Panel member Larry Ditto exhorted his audience to recruit from within their own communities to ensure a diverse staff. USFWS photo.

to hire someone from a non-traditional educational background or recruit talent from another region of the country. It’s okay to have to teach someone to drive a tractor... If those people who are our legacy love wildlife and love the land, they’ll do fine no matter where they are from or what they look like.

Managing workforce diversity is not the same as affirmative action.... Affirmative action is only the first step in managing diversity. Once we take our leadership legacy seriously and move to a point where we are leading the diverse workforce needed to accomplish the refuge system mission, we won’t need affirmative action programs any more.

The Service and refuge system are not going to achieve a diverse workforce because of any bureaucratic edicts... Twenty years of putting “diversity” statements in project leaders’ performance standards have not gotten us where we need to go, and another 20 years of that will get us no farther. We can only do the right thing for the refuge system if we each start thinking about our leadership legacy of people. [This is] about the only difference we are really going to make. The “best” people we always say we want to hire are out there and they come in many varieties. If we take that to heart, and make sure we are hiring and retaining folks from different backgrounds, with different

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Diversity Panel Emphasizes Community, Recruitment (continued)

ideas, we can get over the affirmative action hump. When we do that, we will be leading workforce diversity to accomplish the mission of the refuge system in service to the American people.

If they have another refuge system conference in 20 or 30 years, few of us will be asked to come back and give a speech about our great careers. Few of us will get mentioned with reverence in white papers about the giants of history. Only a couple of us will become legends of the refuge culture. But if we take leadership seriously and do the right things about people, we will all provide a lasting leadership legacy that will be reflected in the diversity refuge folk who will warm these chairs at the next conference.

Larry Ditto, Lower Rio Grande Valley/Santa Ana NWR Complex, Texas

"Recruit from Your Community. We Can't Go Wrong."

If [you want] to have the benefits of a diverse workforce, stronger grass roots support, better public understanding of our mission and goals, and better employee retention, then recruit from your community. Wildlife managers are really people managers.

The Fish & Wildlife Service dedicates most of its resources to meeting the needs of people for the promotion of wildlife and habitat conservation and to positively incorporating the full spectrum of American society in conservation.

And since people management is what we really do, we need to understand what motivates and influences this diverse public. With a workforce that reflects that diversity, we can see and understand infinitely more of the possibilities for influencing the public's view of conservation.

Any government program is only as good as the public allows it to be, for it is the public who in the end empowers us financially and politically. If the public knows that our agency reflects a cross-section of America, there will be an increased confidence that individual needs are being considered.

That requires that we do a better job of selling ourselves to the public and of making them more aware that we *are* a diverse organization.

A diverse workforce can reduce the opportunity for bias against any segment of the population [when we make] decisions that affect [people] as well as the environment.

Because we're involved with other countries in managing the world's wildlife, that same diverse workforce can be an asset in that arena as well. We hire as many bilingual people as possible at the Lower Rio Grande Valley/Santa Ana Refuge Complex, especially for habitat restoration and outreach programs. Mexico's interest and enthusiasm has increased substantially since they became aware that we have staff who understand their culture and speak their language. Environmental education and partnership building also benefit when we have diverse staffs that reflect the culture and ethnicity of a region like the United States-Mexico border.

When we place employees in areas where they will be part of a minority group, we need to do a better job of preparing them for the feeling of isolation they may encounter in the new community or job. Likewise, staffs who have not worked with minorities should have some preparation as well.

Short-term assignments of all staff to areas with different cultural and ethnic makeup could help prepare everyone for accepting people of different cultures and backgrounds. By recruiting locally, we can improve retention and public support at the same time. And that means that field stations need to be more involved in recruiting instead of leaving all of it to the regional offices.

In South Texas, the population is about 80 percent Hispanic. We hope to prepare Hispanic youth from the area to serve the South Texas refuges in the future. We anticipate some future project leaders will come from this group and we believe they will strengthen refuge connections both with border communities and Mexico.

Since it's difficult to attract applicants for positions in South Texas, we have begun recruiting potential future refuge managers and biologists from our local colleges into the Student Career Enhancement Program. Getting high schools students into the program is critical. Where they choose to go to college is secondary. In fact, we need to encourage them to seek out the best "wildlife" school available.

While these students are in the college program, we are going to try to get summer assignments for them in other areas of the United States, to broaden their experiences and give them an idea of what the rest of the Service is like. By understanding the Service diversity and culture, these students can become more open to working in a variety of settings. At the same time, we hope they will be open to returning to South Texas when they are ready to begin assuming leadership roles, including as project leaders.

Recruit from your community. We can't go wrong.

Margaret Anderson, Aggasiz NWR, Minnesota

Don't Hog Tie Them and Drag 'em in, but Halter 'em and Lead Them

I remember the first time I was asked to talk to a Refuge Academy group in Nebraska—10 years ago—at a session similar to this. As the years went by I saw more women at the academy and I was encouraged by that. And it was my hope that during my last ten years with the Service, women would be "normal"... in the sense that we equally compete[d] for positions and everyone knew that the most qualified person was selected. But I also remember seeing the few minority candidates and thinking they had a long way to go before they would be "normal," and I hoped they had the fortitude to stick with us.

Diversity is a "hot" issue from all sides. It is an emotional issue... it's an issue that I wish would just go away... it personally causes me great anxiety. But it is a pressing issue that our agency must deal with effectively as we

go into the 21st century. We cannot continue to be “socially retarded” and successfully survive. But we cannot sacrifice excellence—good quality employees—just to make us look like the rest of America. And it is in this area that I feel the Service has often made mistakes in the past.

We “hog tied and dragged in folks,” which often didn’t work. It hurt individuals who never really understood what land management was about. We promised some the universe just so they would join us—which created false expectations of what refuge life is like. We tried to keep some marginal performers or we placed good folks in jobs that were hard to fill. Location [plus] resentful staffs equals hostile environments [and] isolation, and [soon these people] were gone.

*We do not hunt
[candidates] down....
[I]f the time comes when
someone does not work
out, we have to be
responsible and cut
the ties....*

As an agency we have made lots of mistakes, but as I look around the room I see we have made progress in the female category. But we do need to work harder with under-represented groups... Larry [Ditto] spoke of local recruitment, which in his area makes sense. The cultural demographics of states like Texas, Florida and California very visually speak to the need [to] meaningfully connect with... people of Hispanic origin... and they need to connect to us.

But what about a state like Minnesota or North Dakota where the majority of folks have very pale skin? Diverse recruitment (in the visual sense) from the local population is more challenging if not downright impossible. Other methods must be employed. For us recruitment has been mostly by word of mouth. Over the last four years at Agassiz we have had two Masters’ degree co-op students graduate... we have

another Master’s student currently working on wolves and we had a female temporary [wage grade] mechanic. I don’t like to categorize these folks by their visual differences, but this is in part what this is about... two are Native American, one is Hispanic, Oriental and Native American... and another is Oriental. No one was forced on us. We found and selected our own. Our cooperators want their project to be successful so they seek and find successful candidates.

I’m here to tell you it’s not an easy job. Many leads fall through but all of us working on this effort do not want folks we have to beg to come join us... or “hog tie and drag in....” We do not hunt [candidates] down.... [I]f the time comes when someone does not work out, we have to be responsible and cut the ties....

Recruits don’t have to have all the principles of land management down or come from [a] hunting and fishing background, but they have to have drive, an open mind and a love for the land... I came from a small town in New Jersey, loved animals, outdoors, hated hunting and trapping, always wanted to be a vet, until my sophomore year in college [when] a friend told me about the wildlife field. I looked into [it], transferred to the University of Missouri, really not having a clue of what wildlife management was about... I volunteered a lot, tried to get meaningful jobs in wildlife [management], but only was offered nature center jobs or [jobs as] YCC crew leaders....

When I look back, I realize how fortunate I was to have run into someone who knew about the wildlife field (because my college didn’t). I came to the field by fate, [but] our agency cannot continue to depend on fate. Throughout my career, but especially early on, I had good supportive bosses, first by luck then by maintaining a hit list of those I would not work for.

Which leads to retention. Once we get them into the field... how do we keep them?

Again, I look back on the supportive bosses I had. I think all new employees should be placed in a supportive atmosphere, especially for their first job, because it gives them something to fall back on when times get rough, and if you hang out with this outfit long enough, times will get rough.

For me the traditional training was critical... managing the land is very different than being a botanist or biologist. Although I lacked experience, I at least understood many of the principles. Many of our recruits from the past did not have that type of educational background that lets them walk into our field with more realistic expectations.

Let people professionally mature at their own rate and don’t push meteoric rises.

We have to be willing to recognize that people make choices about their careers.

...I fear that... we will again slip into “hog tying folks and dragging them in” to make our agency look “normal.” We tried it before and it failed. So it is up to us to find the quality candidates. We have to halter them and lead them to the Service, and the sooner we do it the sooner this issue will go away.

*Jerome Ford, Bayou Cocodrie NWR,
Louisiana*

“If We Manage Diversity, They Will Come”

I’m going to take a different approach today. I’m going to tell you a little story about Tensas refuge. That’s what convinced me I could [work for the Service] for a living... and I owe all of that to George.

One day... George put me on a tractor. He said, “How you likin it?” I said, “I like it OK, George.” He said, “You learn anything?” “Yessir,” I said, and he said, “I’m gonna tell you something: you can do anything you want to, if you want to do it.” And it was at that moment that I realized I wanted to be an employee with the Fish & Wildlife Service.

For someone like me, who had never left home before—I guess I had never been more than 200 miles from the house—it was kind of frightening. I had all kinds of fears and anxieties about what I would find on a national wildlife refuge. I said, “Man, nobody’s gonna look like me, walk like me,

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Retention and Investment are Key, Panelists Say (continued)

and their hair's going to be different." But at D'Arbonne [refuge], Lee Fulton gave me a chance to work independently and put to use things I had learned at Grambling State University. And I thank Lee for that. When I went to Mississippi Sandhill Crane refuge, Joe Hardy afforded me the same opportunity.

I want to talk about another retention issue...all of us in here are managers and project leaders and supervisors and we manage a lot of things, from funds and money to habitat, animals and people. But when we think people, most of the time we think about the general public. Our staff consists of people and we have to manage them as well.

So when someone walks through our door, a new employee [there] for the first time—and they don't look like us or talk like us and their hair is different—it's incumbent upon us as managers to manage the situation not only for the new employee, but for the existing employees. That's our job. We're managers. We must do that, whether we want to or not.

I think if we do that, our retention numbers will be a lot better. We will provide the positive experience just like I had, that made me stay. We must do that. We don't have a choice. I'm going to leave you with an expression you've never heard before.

If we manage diversity, they will come.

Mamie Parker, Special Assistant to the Deputy Director, Washington, DC

"Make the Deposit to Get the Return"

Today we're talking about learning from our past, and helping us to pave the future. And I'm going to speak a little about my past.

...I'm not a refuge manager...[but] I want to talk about [Teddy] Roosevelt, too, because he talked about being an uncommon person in an uncommon place and that's kind of how I feel about being in the Fish & Wildlife

Service. But I get emotional as I stand here...and think about all the people who have made me what I am...I couldn't have done it without you. That included a lot of refuge [people], and here this morning I want to take a deep breath and say, "Thank you."

I learned the importance of assimilation as my mother and I sat down on the riverbanks and fished for catfish and grinnners. I learned to talk to her and to read...Remember when they had those Coke bottles and they said, "No deposit, no return?" I was showing off to my mother and I wanted to read this to her [from] this bottle, and I said, "No deposit, no return." And she gave me a lesson in life about that.

My key point is related to diversity. We have to make some deposits to get some returns....Nothing in, nothing out. And that means that as managers, we have to do a better job of interacting and investing in our new employees, in our women and minorities. We have a responsibility to make some deposits, to get some returns.

I want to tell you how I started working for the Fish & Wildlife Service. There was a recruiter who came from Arkansas and he heard about how I would fish all morning and "assimilate" in the afternoon. He wanted to meet this avid angler so he came down and sold me on the Fish & Wildlife Service. I said yes, I wanted to join, and that person was Hannibal Bolton.

Two weeks later I thought I was going to be working in Arkansas, and he informed me I was going to Wisconsin. I said, "What about the cold weather?"...He said these white folks had given us [minorities] these jobs and we don't want to take them, and we need to stop complaining. So I said, "Okay, I'll go and try it." So that's how my journey began with the Fish & Wildlife Service.

I look back over my 20 years and I realize how I assimilated in the organization and I think it's important for us to figure out how to do that. I'm going to briefly go over five things that I think are important.

Habit number one...[is to] be proactive and be prepared; I think that's really important for women and minorities and we shouldn't let people push us, because we're minorities, into jobs we're not qualified for. Managers, we should be like Hallmark cards and care enough to send the very best.

Secondly, we have to begin with the end in mind. I'm using the words of our Director now. She always says, "at the end of the day..." This is goal setting. We have to set some goals, make some deposits, to get some returns. And our number one goal is to "save the dirt," and as we look into the year 2020, we're going to need a diverse group of people to help us save dirt.

Putting first things first—that's priority setting. I tell minority students and minority employees that we have to master the job with excellence and be our worst critics. And we have to be ambassadors to our people. Sometimes we have to make investments in children and other people to make them...realize we're okay, too...

Think "win-win." What we have to realize is that our new students, new employees, women and minorities are sometimes diamonds in the rough and we have to help them assimilate and make investments in them so they can be the best they can be.

Seek first to understand, then be understood....You have to understand the culture of the organization.

Finally, the one thing I want to mention is that we need to keep growing....We have to keep improving, continue to make deposits to get returns...and I think of this one point my Momma always made us say...It goes like this..."Each day I give the best of me individually. I'm only one but not alone. Our finest day is yet unknown."

I think that's what we need to do. Make deposits to get returns, continuing to improve, knowing that our finest day in diversity in the Service is yet unknown.

Do One Thing, Urges Assistant Secretary Barry



"No goal is too tall." Assistant Secretary Don Barry encouraged refuge managers to think big and to commit to doing at least one thing to improve the refuge system. Photo by Ryan Hagerty.

...This is sort of a State of the Union address on where we all are.

Obviously back in 1974 the refuge system was a lot smaller and more homogenous than it is today. There were 368 units then, comprising about 32 million acres. In the 24 intervening years, we have created 148 additional wildlife refuges; we're now 58 million acres bigger, and we've added another million acres of wildlife protection areas—for those of you quick with math, you'll see that we're now up to 516 refuges....

One of the biggest challenges took place in 1975; [Interior] Secretary Rogers C.B. Morton decided at that point that it would be a good idea to have another agency—in this case, BLM—take over management of three units of the system, the so-called game range areas, [saying that] BLM would make a fine manager of the game range areas.

Fortunately for the refuge system, we had (Congressman) John Dingell on patrol.... Dingell very quickly gave Secretary Morton the legislative spanking of his life and quickly amended the Refuge Administration Act in 1976 and made it very clear that units of the refuge system are to be managed by the director of the Service. Since 1976, that's been the law of the land. And this closed the case on those sorts of ideas, right? Not quite.

In 1981, Secretary James Watt...decided to put the United States Geological Survey in charge of the study that was to be undertaken on the coastal plain of the Arctic refuge. And from his perspective, this was the way to show there was a new team in town.... This time the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals concluded that the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act and John Dingell's amendment in 1976 made it very clear that the director of the Service, not the USGS, was to be in charge of the study of the coastal plain.

[T]he next systemwide frontal assault on the integrity of the refuge system occurred in the aftermath of the selenium contamination crisis at the Kesterson NWR—eventually [we persuaded] Secretary Hodel to shut Kesterson down.

But in the course of the post-Kesterson aftermath, we ended up going through one of the most grueling gun battles that I ever experienced as a chief counsel for the Service—it had to do with an area adjacent to Kesterson called the Grasslands.... [T]he scariest moment of all came [when] the regional solicitor from Sacramento rather aggressively asserted that there was no responsibility on the part of the Secretary to exercise broad powers to keep a refuge alive, and if the Secretary so chose, he could kill a wildlife refuge and that was that.

...Even though I won in that particular case, I never forgot what a close call it was. And what a close call it had been. Because had the truth been known as that time, a technical reading of the Administration Act suggested [the Solicitor] was right; there was nothing on the face of the statute that had a stewardship for the Secretary of Interior to keep a wildlife refuge in business. And I have to say that even though this matter was ultimately resolved in my favor, it had a huge impact on me.

Two years ago, I had the opportunity to help draft an Executive Order for President Clinton on management and care of the National Wildlife Refuge System.... I decided to use this as an opportunity to put in that statement of stewardship responsibility that I felt was missing in the Refuge Administrative Act.... We stuck in some language regarding the long-term stewardship response, not only for the system as a whole, but for each individual refuge.... We then threw in for good measure an express response on the part of the Secretary to maintain the biological integrity, diversity and environmental health of the refuge system and individual refuges. I would like to predict today...that this one section dealing with the Secretary's stewardship response and the directive to maintain the environmental health of each unit of the refuge system will be looked back on decades from now as the most sweeping, important enactment in the history of the refuge system....

I have to say over the last 24 years, we have made tremendous progress in eliminating inappropriate and incompatible activities and regaining the focus of what wildlife refuges are all about....

Refuges today are more what they were meant to be than at any other point in the history of the system. I think the grossest past examples of incompatible activities have been vanquished. This was a trend started in large measure with a lot of headway through John Turner's leadership and it continues today....

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Do One Thing, Urges Assistant Secretary Barry (continued)

I'd like to sort of shift from battles of the past and give you my reading on how things are today. A summary of my State of the Union on the refuge system.

My 15-second soundbite is that unlike Rodney Dangerfield, the National Wildlife Refuge System is finally getting some respect. I can point to a variety of things that happened in the last two years. The first-ever presidential Executive Order on the care and protection of the refuge system. Congress overwhelmingly enacted the Refuge Improvement Act with a vote of 407 to 1....

In addition to that, as a result of tireless efforts on the part of Jamie Clark and Dan Ashe, the refuge system for the first time is authorized to tap into the highway fund for repair and rehabilitation of refuge roads to the tune of \$20 million a year. We also have now a Secretary of the Interior who not only supports expanded refuge funding, but will also say no to things like mining adjacent to a national wildlife refuge.

I think the refuge system has a huge amount to offer the American people. I think the refuge system today perhaps enjoys the broadest base of support in its history. You've all heard and know the work of the CARE group. I think that is symptomatic of why the Fish & Wildlife Service is having so much more success in the appropriations process.

I would like to close with two observations.... I have to say that I think it's time for abandonment of the motto, "if you think at all, think small" for the refuge system.

Now, I only have one moment on the back of an envelope to come up with an alternative one and it is incredibly pithy and mediocre. I'll let the rest of you work on it to improve it. I thought if we're not going to use "if you think at all, think small," how about "when Refuges thinks at all, no goal is too tall." It's kind of a stretch. Stretch those horizons.

The last point is more personal for me and for everyone in this room. I have to say that if this conference is to really be a success, we need to have a permanent impact of some sort....

I think...everybody in this room needs to pull out a piece of paper and write down one thing new to make an improvement or difference for the refuge system when you get back.

We all have different jobs. We all have different opportunities to influence and help the refuge system. Everybody needs to do one thing to help the refuge system when they go home.

I'd like to share with you what mine's going to be. It was about 10 days ago when I was pulled in unexpectedly into a very heated debate over a conference call on the terms of a rider being negotiated on the Hill. It had to do with allowing some Alaska Vietnam veterans to go back and reselect some allotment land in Alaska. These are people who were precluded from being able to take advantage of the allotment program because they were serving in Vietnam at the time....

Without having any background in what the real issues were or knowing very much about it, the first thing I heard was what areas were going to be exempted. I waded into the debate with guns blazing and said since 1971 we have repeatedly...treated wildlife refuges like second class citizens compared to our national parks. Could somebody please explain to me why wildlife refuges deserve less protection than our parks? I said as long as I am Assistant Secretary, I could not support any policy based on the premise that refuges were less important than parks.

I did not prevail, and refuges will be one of the areas that could potentially be considered for selection.

I just don't see the justification or rationale for treating refuges different from parks. I love them both.... My commitment when I leave is that as long as I'm Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, I will not support any administrative or legislative policy that continues to perpetuate the myth that wildlife refuges are less important than our national parks.

They are both important and we will save them both.

Theodore Roosevelt IV: "It's Not Just About the 'Cuddly Wuddlies'"

More comments on the Keystone conference...

"I think each and every one of us that attended the conference left with a renewed commitment to reach out to our traditional partners and stakeholders while at the same time seeking out new publics and future partners—without a doubt we can't protect our sacred trust alone."

Richard Hannan, Deputy Chief, Division of Endangered Species, Washington, D.C.

"I left the meeting inspired by the passion and integrity that exists within the refuge system, knowing that if we have that commitment to wild things as the cornerstone for the Service, then we all have a bright future in protecting our nation's fish and wildlife heritage. Thanks, Refuges, for your inspiration and leadership."

Charlie Wooley, Assistant Regional Director-Ecological Services, Minneapolis, Minnesota



Theodore Roosevelt IV. Photo: Michael Mella.

...I'll begin...with my high school biology teacher.

He was an audacious, outspoken renegade. I liked him immensely. He also taught a Great Books course and one day, this Great Books-erstwhile biology teacher told us that institutions, such as churches, universities, government bodies suffer from a natural entropy and that over time, [they] tend to lose sight of their original mission and become self-serving, more committed to their own prestige, more absorbed in their own survival, than in serving the purposes for which they were founded.

At their worst, my biology teacher told us, these great institutions become obstacles to the pursuit of their own original purpose. Then comes the time of revolt. Revolution. A turning around. The failing institution must find a way to realign itself with its mission. To do so, it engages in rigorous self-examination. It reimagines and revitalizes itself by turning around and looking back to its roots—to the vision and passion that inspired it and that must continue to sustain it.

...As you know, in 1992, a lawsuit brought by a coalition of non-profit environmental organizations against the Fish & Wildlife Service said that the National Wildlife Refuge System, "suffering from chronic fiscal starvation and administrative neglect, was falling far short of meeting the urgent habitat needs of the nation's wildlife."

In response and in what remains an almost unbelievable act of institutional bravery, especially among government bureaucracies, the Service began to turn around. And in 1997, you gained the support of what you long required and finally, through the Clinton Administration, attained: an organic act, a clear statement of purpose that defines your mission and is now the law of the land. Your white paper titled *Fulfilling the Promise* is a mighty testament to your knowledge and skill, your resourcefulness and resolve.

You turned around and faced the great minds and hearts that formed the beginning of the refuges: Theodore Roosevelt, Rachel Carson, Aldo Leopold, Ding Darling, J. Clark Salyer....

Many right things are in place now.

The signing of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act places wildlife and their habitats first.

The Fish & Wildlife Service has embraced and is committed to an ecosystem approach in its stewardship of these resources.

Huge advances are being made in conservation science—from technology that uses sophisticated tracking devices linked to satellites to important and critical gains in wildlife medicine.

Several conservation organizations have joined forces to work toward ensuring that funding levels for our nation's public lands are, at the very least, adequate. The National Wildlife Refuge Association, with the support, I am very pleased to say, of a number of foundations...[is] launching a campaign to increase public awareness of and support for the refuges.

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Theodore Roosevelt IV: "It's Not Just About the 'Cuddly Wuddlies'" (continued)

So what is the problem? Appropriation levels cannot be relied upon; Congressional support for the environment and our public lands wavers.

It's a mystery... What's not getting through to Congress?... How is it they are not hearing this?

...I... believe that there is something in the way we framed the argument in the past that helped to create this delusion that we are saving "cuddly wuddlies"... at the expense of people and jobs.

Let me return to the wise sage of this story, my high school biology teacher. Now remember that he was speaking a few years ago. At that time, he speculated that compassion for other species, a quality possibly unique to humans, is actually an adaptive advantage: it might save us, the earth's most voracious predator, from heedlessly destroying every other form of life upon the planet and upon which we depend.

In drawing attention to the catastrophic loss of other species, environmental advocates have effectively appealed to compassion. We focused on the predicaments of the "cuddly wuddlies," the sentinel or the charismatic species, usually birds or larger mammals. And the American public was moved....

But in the process we lost sight of the second part of the equation—the adaptive advantage of compassion: in saving them, we save ourselves.

In saving them, we save vital pieces of healthy ecosystems. We save ecosystems, the fabric of life that preserves our air, water, our food sources and medicinal arsenal.

And—*no*—saving other species is not on a par with providing recreational opportunities for our citizens... Jet skis... (or) the pollinators of food crops... I don't know. Which do you think is more important?

We are not saving scenery and pretty places so that our children can have aesthetic, museum-like experiences. We may save our

souls in the process of saving the rest of life on earth, but we are also saving our lives. That's the second part of the equation.

From that vantage point, I was particularly pleased to read the section in your white paper that described refuges as "anchors of biodiversity." We all know that the refuges alone cannot save enough critical habitat and species, but we also know that, without the refuges, it can't be done at all. Nor can it be done without fully engaging the American people. I believe that when politicians weigh... voters... versus special interests... the voice and will of the American people shall prevail.

The refuges have had staggering, absolutely staggering, success in enlisting volunteers and keeping them engaged as stakeholders in these lands. Again, in one of the drafts of your white paper, I read that 30,000 volunteers contribute more than a million hours of work to the system. You described it as a gift to the American people, valued at more than \$9 million.

It is a gift that you facilitated by your willingness and enthusiasm: you reached out to a small constituency, you instructed, developed and encouraged. Bravo. Well done!

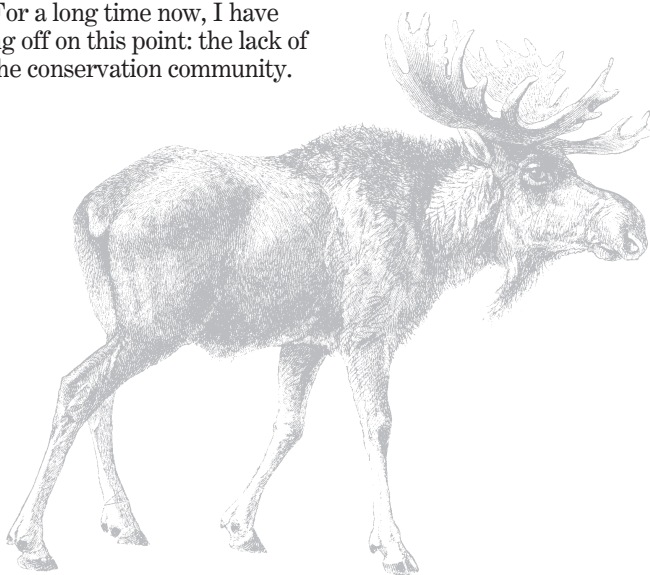
Which brings me to another section of your white paper—there's just so much to like in it—but I particularly appreciated the section titled "Building a Broader Base of Support." In it, you encourage staff to find ways to reach out to a larger cross section of Americans. For a long time now, I have been sounding off on this point: the lack of diversity in the conservation community.

In this we are all failing, abysmally. How can we claim to be a grassroots movement when minorities are so poorly represented among us? I hope that the refuge system will lead the way in this regard and provide models for the rest of the environmental community in how to broaden our constituency.

After years of advocacy, we all [are] finally beginning to realize that we must don many hats and speak from and to many vantage points if we are to mobilize the political will to meet the environmental challenges of the next century. Effective action as well as effective advocacy for the environment requires making connections, envisioning consequences, unveiling the unseen taken-for-granted natural mechanisms that sustain all life on earth.

We need to make connections between disciplines of study, between people, Congress, and connections between wilderness lands themselves so that wildlife is not stranded in small gene pools on isolated islands of habitat. We need to make connections between our heritage of past leadership and our goals for today's leaders. We need to make the connection between ourselves and the rest of life on this plant, for compassion's sake, and for the well-being of our children.

While I do not like to put words in a dead man's mouth, I can't help but feel that if President Roosevelt were here tonight, he would look out at this sea of faces and say, "By Godfrey! Now that's a living legacy!"



Realizing Our Vision: Thoughts from Refuge Managers of the Year

Steve Thompson, GARD-Southeast Region, Atlanta, Georgia

The Rewards of Stepping Up to Leadership

What I would like to do is share with you some lessons learned the hard way—coming up through the refuge system over the past 22 years—and I would ask that you consider some of my thoughts on leadership.

First, an observation that one dedicated professional really can make a difference. Over the years I've seen refuge managers like Joe Mazzone, Bob Fields, Skippy Reeves, Ray Rauch, Ron Bisbee, Jim Kurth, Mike Hedrick, and Gary Zahm fight the good fight and win. The time to make that difference for the National Wildlife Refuge System has never been better than now. The people [who] watch over the National Wildlife Refuge System have always been filled with passion and strength. We have a mission for the system—and we all certainly have the missionary zeal, but what we can't afford is a "holier than thou" attitude because it turns off our colleagues and friends. The system simply needs everyone's help.

Those of you who have lived on the land and had the privilege of watching over these public trusts are the luckiest people on earth. Never forget how proud we are of you and your staffs....[I]t takes dedicated, effective people in the field, in the regional offices and in Washington if we are to win the important resource battle to come.

Leadership has never been easy, will never be easy, and is almost accompanied with a great deal of personal sacrifice and discomfort.

As I have traveled across the land, I have often heard two statements: that the refuge system is the largest program in the Service, yet we don't have any representation in the Directorate, and that refuge managers don't move and won't apply for key leadership jobs.

Mollie Beattie had some simple advice [for me]: either come back and help with our leadership challenge or quit complaining. Well, I knew I was in big trouble because I



Ones to watch.

Jay Bellinger, Lou Hinds, Phil Norton, John Schroer and Steve Thompson, pictured left to right, all have previously been honored as "Refuge Manager of the Year" by the National Audubon Society and the National Wildlife Refuge Association. They shared their collected wisdom with their colleagues during the Keystone conference. Photo by Ryan Hagerty.

couldn't quit complaining. Even so, the first three times she asked I said "No." Trips back and forth to Washington, discussions with Jim and Jamie Clark over ice cream, short details with Dick Smith and a month with Don Barry eventually wore me down.

I applied for jobs in Washington because I didn't think our refuges or our refuge managers' jobs could stay the way they were for very long without improvements in our leadership. I knew that unless some of our best and brightest refuge leaders were willing to step up and take on some larger challenges and fight the battles at... the regional, national and international level, we would always complain about Service leadership. To a certain extent, we have met the leadership enemy and the enemy is us....and I think the Service leadership is suffering from a lack of land management experience.

For a long time, opportunities for advancement in the refuge system were severely limited. All that has changed. We now have PARs, GARDs, branch chiefs and a Deputy Division Chief—all these positions offer unique and challenging opportunities for people with refuge experience. People are doing their time in Washington and getting out with important and rewarding leadership positions. The only thing missing, in my mind, is a handful of GS-15 project leaders....

Now, it has been rumored—so it must be true—that within the next few years perhaps half of the Directorate will retire. There will be many paths into the Directorate. Some selections will bring with them exceptional political skills, others legal, ES, Fisheries, and/or research expertise. Our challenge is for a few of the best and brightest leaders in the refuge system to step forward and compete for the key leadership roles in the agency.

...I miss the field every day. But the rewards of stepping up can be enormous, including leadership from a Washington Office staff perspective.

[This means] fighting the good fight inside the Beltway, where the games are played in three large and dangerous arenas—authorization, appropriations and the Administration. [It means] fighting for the conservation of refuges like Arctic NWR, Izembek NWR or McFadden. Or sitting on a hard wooden bench in the Supreme Court...

[It also means] the steady stream of national issues and an opportunity to try your best at problem solving. The opportunity to pick the brains of some of the best. The opportunity to stop some very bad things from happening to your refuges—many of you will never know how bad.

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Award-Winning Refuge Managers Reflect on Leadership (continued)

Perhaps the highlight of my tour in Washington was standing in the Oval Office watching the President sign the Refuge Improvement Act, surrounded by Congressional and conservation leaders, [and] Service leaders. I had the opportunity to ride back from the White House with Secretary Babbitt, Assistant Secretary Don Barry, Jamie Clark and Dan Ashe.... I was most impressed...listening to the excitement in the voices of the Secretary, Don Barry, Jamie and Dan as they talked about how extraordinary the refuge system was. The opportunity to represent all of you and the system was overwhelming.

If you are part of the support base for the National Wildlife Refuge System, you must protect the honor and integrity of this country's natural core, for in the end, nature is as much a part of you as your family, friends, and the very spirit that lives within you.

John Schroer, Chincoteague NWR, Virginia

Passing Down the Passion

The integrity of the National Wildlife Refuge System does not hinge on the organizational structure; the integrity of our system hinges on the collective integrity of each of us—the refuge managers and other employees of the system.

How we carry ourselves on and off the job will create that integrity, which is a reflection of the love and passion that we have for refuges.

Where do we get this passion that we all talk about whenever we mention refuges? We, myself included, say that we don't recruit like we used to and that we are not getting people who have the passion and dedication to protect the refuge system in the future.

Every generation since Paul Krogel stepped onto Pelican Island has changed—we have become more educated, more open to the public, more involved with partnerships, more involved with technology, more suburban and urban, more culturally diverse.

Yes, the times are changing—but they have always been changing.

I venture to say that even the farm boy who came to work for the system did not come having a real passion for refuges. Maybe for the land or hunting or fishing, but not for refuges.

This past summer in Region 5, we brought our co-op students together for a week to work side-by-side and to meet and talk with some of our leaders. One of the objectives was to begin the process of instilling in them a pride and passion for the Service.

As I looked in the eyes of those new recruits, I saw youth and enthusiasm, eagerness and a willingness to accept new challenges, but I also caught myself thinking, is this who we want to entrust with the future of the National Wildlife Refuge System? My initial reaction was “no way.”

But I thought back to the summer of 1969 when nine trainees descended on Mattamuskeet NWR. I wondered what Refuge Manager John Davis and Deputy Manager Burkett Neely thought as they surveyed their new crop of young and enthusiastic college students, and I will bet that it was the same as when I met those co-op students this past summer.

Sometimes we love this system so much that it is hard to think about letting others take over. However, we must pass on to the new recruits the passion we have for refuges.

The passion we have for refuges is contagious. But in order for it to be so, we must wear that passion on our sleeves so that all employees and all people will see it and be infected with it.

As employees, but particularly as refuge managers, being negative about the organization, the paperwork overload, and all the other things we do that have no connection to protecting wildlife, unfortunately also can be contagious. We need to rise above that at all times.

We should take advantage of the Service's new organization. Many of us have GARDs who have no refuge background, and this has been viewed as very negative; however, we can also look at it as an opportunity to win another over to the refuge system.

Ecoteams working at the field level also give us the opportunity to sell refuges to all other programs. Hopefully we have been doing this all along; if not, let's take advantage of this opportunity to make all employees advocates of the system.

The best legacy that we and each succeeding generation can leave behind is a group of employees who are even more dedicated and passionate about the system than we are.

We have a long way to go in fulfilling the promise and when we get there hopefully our successors will have another promise and another vision to take them into the future, as times will continue to change.

As we leave this wonderful conference, we should renew our own enthusiasm, renew our passion for the refuges, view our problems as challenges, and meet those challenges for the betterment of the refuge system which will also strengthen the Service.

Phil Norton, Bosque del Apache NWR,
New Mexico

Nostalgia and Challenge: Reflections on Refuge Management on the Eve of the Turn of the Century

At Monte Vista NWR in 1969, we lived isolated from the community. We had very little contact with the community and we arrived and left without anybody knowing and/or caring. We also worked isolated from the community. We had no partners. As my world became wider, I had more exposure to people and ideas. It brought a lot of changes in my thinking.

I began to learn more about myself. One of the things I learned was that maybe I was not quite as open minded as I once thought. Early in my career I had a racial discrimination complaint brought against me. It made me re-think my values and think about how other people with different values saw me.

The need to become involved in the community became very evident. If you want the money and manpower and support to do the job you need to do, you cannot depend on waiting for what comes down the pipeline through normal channels....

I have always taken a lot of pride in the people I work with, but if we have so many good people, how come the Service has so many problems? It occurred to me that we were hiring biologists and promoting them to [be] administrators, quite often with very little attention given to how good at management they may or may not be, and then doing very little to help develop them into being better.

Anybody can manage if someone gives you a million dollars and tells you what to do. The trick is to know how to get the million dollars and to know how to leverage that into two million, then know what to do with it when you get it....

There will never be enough money or people available to do the job that needs to be done. To get the job done you have to look at non-traditional ways: partnerships with companies that donate money, equipment training schools to do your project, volunteers, and Friends groups

I feel that we have always had loyalty to the Service, a real *esprit de corps*, and a tremendous desire to do what's best for the resource. We need to keep this and not lose it. I for one have lost some of my loyalty to the organization. Maybe it is because I am getting older and have become jaded or maybe it is because the organization has forgotten what it could be and should be. The desire to do what is best for the resource is still there, there is a lot of loyalty of one person to another, but we have lost most of our *esprit de corps*. We need to get it back. This conference is a good first step.

I think we have to look beyond boundaries—mental, physical and emotional. Get out of our box. Take advantage of opportunities (Friends groups, volunteers, partnerships, working with local communities), show appreciation for good work, encourage teamwork, seek information and apply it, and take risks... If we are comfortable, we are not doing our job. We need to push the envelope every day, to the edge, just don't go over the edge and fall....

Don't be afraid to try something no one else has tried.

Don't be afraid to fail.

Be flexible; always have a "Plan B" up your sleeve!

Don't be a purist. Do what you must to get things done! Learn to compromise a little. I have seen so many good projects die because someone could not or would not give on a minor insignificant point....

We face many challenges as we go into the future. I want to just touch upon two... One, the need for biological data and biological knowledge, and integrating it into management; the need for linkage with biology outside refuges...; conservation

initiatives such as the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, Partners in Flight, and the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve; relationships with universities and research centers, continuing education for staff; knowing your refuge biologically and managing with biological focus that is linked to a larger world view.

Secondly, diversity in our workforce. As stands of saltcedar are monotypical and not to be tolerated by a good refuge manager, so is our workforce sometimes monotypical.... I believe that the future lies with a more diverse workforce in refuges than we have in today's world. Monotypical experiences and thinking will only lead to mediocrity. We need to be challenged, we need different ideas, we need different perspectives in order to grow as an organization... and to relate to our public constituents who are as diverse in their ideas and experiences as we have ever seen in the 95 years of the refuge system.

I hear a lot of talk about doing a better job of recruiting, but to me the problem is... retention. We need to create an environment where people are comfortable and can work at their potential....

A lot of people see the melting pots as "unity" with "diversity" leading to fragmentation, but I would propose that those two ideas can work together, both in American society and on a national wildlife refuge. The unification comes in the ability to work to achieve a common goal... and the diversity in who is on the team and what they bring to the effort.

I am proud to be a manager and like many of you, I sometimes reflect on the "good ole days"... but I believe good managers need to anticipate trends, shifts, and changes on the refuge and in society at large. I think a good manager should constantly be seeking information, and information comes sometimes from the most unlikely places... [such as when] a volunteer who works in Alaska during the summer and winters at your refuge mentions a new technique... I hope we all learn to keep an open mind about new information and its sometimes non-traditional sources.

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Managers Contemplate the Past, Present and Future of the Refuge System (continued)

Be like a sponge. Soak up information. Read. LISTEN. Ask lots of questions. Follow up on what you see and hear. Steal ideas regularly.

I believe curiosity to be a needed element for anyone working for refuges. Curiosity about the natural world, about the social world and the big picture. I urge all of you to take a course once a year that has nothing to do with your work specifically, but that stimulates your thinking and provides a fresh perspective...something that helps you grow personally.

I think we need to have fun along the way. We get so caught up in the everyday whirl of paper, obligations, deadlines, phone calls, appointments, meetings and projects we often forget that potlucks bring people together, and a couple of hours at sunset with a pair of binoculars looking at birds brings peace to the soul and keeps things in perspective. Laughter is a good tonic to keep on hand in the office....

Finally, we need to say “thank you” one in a while...to our colleagues, our staff, our volunteers, our community...personal relationships are a large part of the web that makes for a successful refuge system nationally and locally.

Louis Hinds, J. N. “Ding” Darling NWR, Florida

The Swinging Pendulum

The coordinators of this conference asked that we refuge managers speak from our hearts to provide an inspirational message that you can carry away with you. As I prepared, I realized that my perception of the refuge system was that of a swinging pendulum. Let me explain.

It doesn't seem so long ago (1967, in fact) that I was a high school kid with a summer job at Great Swamp NWR in New Jersey. I remember it was a lot of hot, hard, dirty work like moving, painting, boundary posting, fencing and building board walks. But I also remember that in the evenings many of us would come back together and band ducks and woodcock, not for the

overtime, but for the sheer joy of fun of working with the resource. Those are very fond memories for me and I am sure many of you have similar experiences.

I finally became a full time maintenance man in 1974 and can remember how excited I was to be part of the Fish & Wildlife Service and wear the uniform. It seems naive now, but back then, I believed that the National Wildlife Refuge System was the Fish & Wildlife Service. I could sense the control refuges had over the entire Service and to a degree, even over state fish and game agencies and their programs.

There seemed to be no doubt about it—the National Wildlife Refuge System was the “flagship” of the Service and we were proud of it.

We entered the 80s on a high note but as I look back on those days I realize the pendulum had reached the end of its upward positive swing.

The national fervor about the environment had cooled somewhat and the political climate was definitely changing. States were wielding the sword of “states rights” and they had a sympathetic Presidential ear. The new Secretary of the Interior, James Watt, had a dramatically different view of land and resource management and some land managers quickly found themselves at odds with either the Department, the environmental community and/or Congress.

Other divisions within the Service were growing and obtaining a larger share of the overall Service budget. Refuge managers found themselves with shrinking budgets and FTEs and being asked “to do more with less.”

This friction between the field, the regions and Washington office did not go unnoticed by those wishing to change the power structure of the Service. The pendulum had reached full speed in an opposite and negative direction. Things seemed normal in the field but in the Washington Office a political storm was battering the division.

In 1988, I made the decision to take a job in the Washington Office with the Division of Refuges. The division's leadership and

staff had been reduced by reassignment or retirement. The remaining staff were forbidden to have any contact with the regions or the field, and all correspondence to the regional or field offices had to first be approved through the Director's corridor.

Congress wanted to help the ailing refuge system by providing funds. However, division staff were instructed by the President, through OMB and the Service leadership, to inform Congress that we did not need additional funding. Morale of division staff was at rock bottom.

Again reflecting back at the events of those days, I would say the pendulum was at the end of its bitter negative backwards swing.

By 1989, good things were beginning to happen. With the election of a new President, the administration, although still conservative, at least was not openly hostile towards the environment. The Maintenance Management System began to pay big dividends—approximately \$11 million to refuges in the first year... In addition to the MMS program, Congress and the Department started a new fire program and refuges began receiving FTEs and significant funding to support and expand its fire programs. The issue of compatibility suddenly appeared on the radar screen of every refuge manager.

Although completing compatibility determinations was a time consuming process, this systemwide effort brought the nation's attention to the diverse “uses” taking place on refuges. This eventually led to elimination of non-compatible uses that managers had the authority to regulate.

By 1992, with the election of another new president, the pendulum was again swinging in an upward positive direction. For the vast majority of you in the room today, the events of the last six years are well known. Even though there have been bumps in the road, the refuge system has seen larger budgets; strong support from the Secretary; a coalition of NGOs supporting the refuge system; “Friends” groups popping up all over the country; volunteerism at an all time high and new legislation to support their efforts; partnership programs everywhere; new organic legislation that binds our refuge

system together; the first ever National Wildlife Refuge System Conference; and a vision document, *Fulfilling the Promise*, to carry us into the next century. This is truly a far cry from 10 years ago.

I have a simple question for you: are we reaching the end of the positive pendulum upswing again? In my personal opinion, the pendulum can and will continue to swing in a positive upward direction. It will do this if and only if we have learned from our mistakes of the past. I now know the National Wildlife Refuge System is not the Fish and Wildlife Service. It is a proud, visible, key component of the Service. But to accomplish the wildlife protection, restoration and enhancement goals we have dedicated our lives to we must realize we cannot do it alone.

Will the pendulum swing in the opposite direction again? If history is our teacher, then the answer is yes. All we can do is be ready. And when the pendulum starts to head in the negative, backwards direction we must go there as an agency, supporting each other and countering the momentum that is carrying us backwards. If we do this, maybe the swing will not be as long or far reaching, allowing for quick and steady recovery.

As I said in the beginning, I can remember how excited I was to be part of the Fish & Wildlife Service and wear the uniform, and I still feel that way today. I think I speak for the vast majority gathered here today when I say the Service and the refuge system are one in our blood. We have sweated and bled, and some have even died to make this system of lands and waters a national treasure. I challenge all of us gathered here, and future leaders and refuge managers, to continue to care for the jewels of this national treasure with the same pride, passion and love that managers have demonstrated for more than 95 years. For if we do this, generations to follow will inherit a wildlife and wildland legacy unequalled in the world, bounded by the flying "Blue Goose."

Jay R. Bellinger, Kodiak NWR, Alaska

"Refuges Should Flourish in the Near Future"

I was fortunate to work under five outstanding refuge managers during my first nine years in refuges.... Their leadership by example gave me many pointers that helped me in my project leader positions. The greatest gift they gave me, however, was their passion for the refuge system and its wild resources—it was contagious.

I've been around long enough that I've seen many thrusts in the Fish & Wildlife Service. When I started it was: "the gate is shut because it's shut, refuges are for wildlife and to hell with the public." The next phase was to encourage public use. The only way to get additional money was for public use. We were told that if we didn't have demand for picnic areas [or] campgrounds... [to] go out and create [them]. The next phase was to eliminate all non-wildlife oriented public use.

We went through management by objectives and... on to program management. We then dropped program management and went to the straight line authority within programs. And we are now [using the] ecosystem [approach].

No one in the... past has cared enough about the refuge system to approve and spend the time and money to put together a conference like this. If we can capture and summarize the information generated here and it is implemented by the administration, this conference will be one of the most significant events in the history of the refuge system.

Our National Wildlife Refuge System is unique... as most of the rest of the Service is comprised of regulatory, advisory, educational, scientific and support offices. Refuge field operations work much differently from most other offices in the Service. Daily, refuge folks are personally accountable to constituents in regard to

decisions they make.... They are also called upon to do jobs for... other Service offices when it occurs in their area.

Therefore, it is hard for individuals who have not worked on refuge field stations to understand the [refuge] operation.

If we are going to be part of the Fish & Wildlife Service we also need to be part of the leadership of the Service.... It has become clear to me that refuge people can no longer stay on the refuge like I did. We need to have more people willing to go up the ladder.

Ecosystem management is a good concept. Hopefully many of us were trying to do this in the past. Under the current program it may be possible to reach out beyond our boundaries and correct problems before they arrive on our doorstep....

Team management can also be a good thing.... I agree that we usually have to take off our "bowling shirts" to operate as a team. We need to remember to hang the shirt within reach, however, as we have first line authority on our refuges.

We need to recognize our responsibilities and understand our authority and exercise [them] to the best of our ability. We are the experts hired to manage the lands and resources for the people.... and we should base our decisions on facts and our experience as we usually have the best, most current information.

I am enthused by this conference. With the CARE groups, parties, friends and supporting administration, refuges should flourish in the near future.

Breakout Sessions: Opportunities for Discussion

Each delegate to the National Wildlife Refuge System Conference had an opportunity to participate in four different breakout sessions. Led by workgroup chairs, participants discussed issues of wildlife, habitat, people and leadership.

Near the conference conclusion, the workgroup chairs presented summaries of their discussions. Following are some of the results of each group's session.

Wildlife workgroup

Chair: Dave Allen, Regional Director, Anchorage, Alaska

- Wildlife must come first.
- Concern was expressed regarding resources availability and providing leadership versus the issuance of edicts.
- Traditional wildlife management and population goals for trust species need reconciliation with biodiversity goals and objectives.
- Wildlife populations should have integrated goals and objectives, and the National Wildlife Refuge System, ecosystems and individual refuges should be the primary levels for goal-setting. Links between levels will be the key to effective goal-setting. Ecosystem goals should come first.
- The ideal set of biodiversity goals would mimic natural systems. However, biodiversity goals and objectives should be outlined for individual refuges, working with communities and other essential partners.
- There is an urgent need for a strong central policy for management of problem species, which can be controversial. A strong public outreach plan is needed to offset frequent misunderstandings by the public.

■ Inventory and monitoring programs require clear management objectives, including standard protocols and data-sharing, a broad and comprehensive base-level program and compatibility with other programs at the ecosystem level.

■ Good biology "is the cornerstone of everything (the Service) stands for," and to that end, the biological staff for the National Wildlife Refuge System needs to be increased, broader and more comprehensive training programs are needed, and "biologists need to get back to...biology."

Habitat workgroup

Chair: Sam Hamilton, Regional Director, Atlanta, Georgia

- There is a need for national, regional and ecosystem habitat priorities to enable refuges to "find their niche" in the larger landscape picture; high-priority needs, not special appropriations or private funding, should drive refuge management.
- Aggressively pursue development of a National Wilderness Management Plan; develop and implement long-term monitoring programs.
- Water rights will be the most significant and important issue the system faces in the coming years, and external threats (air pollution, pesticides) will continue to grow with the general population.
- Every refuge must have access to a biologist whose primary responsibility is to fulfill legal mandates for monitoring long-term habitat changes; biologists should collect habitat data at each refuge using standard protocols, and that data should be consolidated in higher-level databases and should be available to each manager.

■ A strategic growth approach must be biologically driven, but first habitat needs must be defined at the national and local level in order to grow in the right direction at the appropriate time.

■ The concept of refuge demonstration areas is a valid idea for promoting system leadership and habitat management needs. An active outreach program is necessary to promote a land-use ethic among Americans that will further the Service mission.

People workgroup

Chair: Ron Lambertson, Regional Director, Hadley, Massachusetts

- Assess the status of refuge law enforcement; standardize position descriptions; develop career ladders for full-time and collateral duty; establish full-time regional and national coordinators and set standards and station reviews.
- Provide adequate public use staff to refuges, regional and Washington offices.
- Develop staffing-needs standards, create career ladders for public use staff and develop specific training at the National Conservation Training Center.
- Develop policy to define appropriate and compatible public uses and phase out those uses that are inappropriate.
- Develop a three-tier system: wildlife dependent, wildlife neutral and wildlife negative.
- Develop national public use standards, conduct field evaluations and fund deficiencies.

Director Clark Calls Keystone Conference "...the Beginning of an Historic Era"

■ Develop a Visitor Improvement Priority System, establish national ranking criteria and deliver the message to non-traditional audiences.

■ Develop consistent fee and concession policies and ensure that refuges retain the fees they collect.

■ Develop flexible policy guidance for corporate partnerships; differentiate between corporate partnership and corporate sponsorship. Define refuge and corporate benefits and determine if legislation is required.

■ Expand the role of refuge managers in local communities, develop strong "Friends" groups and work with other Service programs.

■ Develop a well-coordinated and consistent outreach strategy with a consistent message; better define "target audiences" and provide adequate funding and staff.

Leadership workgroup

Chair: Ralph Morgenweck, Regional Director, Denver, Colorado

■ Define leadership, along with expectations and accountability.

■ Strengthen recruitment and workforce diversity along with career development.

■ Define leadership's commitment and legacy.



Inspirational leader. *"Although we are separated by distance we are united by vision," said Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark as she closed out the National Wildlife Refuge System Conference. Photo by Ryan Hagerty.*

...While I've been involved in the development of this conference and the *Fulfilling the Promise* document over the past year as Director, I knew a lot was riding on this gathering. A lot was at stake for the refuge system, and therefore for the Fish & Wildlife Service.

Opening this conference on Monday morning, I was overwhelmed, standing up here, looking at my colleagues, knowing they—knowing you—had as much hope as I did for the success of this conference.

Joining our friends and partners on Tuesday evening caused not only the excitement, energy and hope to rise, but also the pressure to ensure success.

Well, I can stand here before you today and proudly tell you: this gathering has clearly been a resounding success! I'll tell you, I know that I—and I'm sure all of you—really needed this fix!

...This week is nearing an end, but this historic moment is just the beginning of an historic era.

America's National Wildlife Refuge System, as I have witnessed this week and for the past 14 months of my tenure as Director, is in good hands. And from what each of you has accomplished this week, the system will remain in good hands...

I would like to recognize that within our ranks this week have been key staff from many of the Service's other program areas. This is another example of how diversity in our ranks contributes to the achievement of our long-term goals. We have benefitted greatly from the attendance of staff from numerous program areas including Fisheries, Ecological Services, Federal Aid, Administration, Law Enforcement, External Affairs and International Affairs...

From the opening reception on Sunday evening, I'm sure you all felt the same energy, the same excitement, as I did. That excitement, that energy, kept building minute by minute, day by day. And now it's time to take what we've experienced here—what we've charted out for the refuge system—and transform it into fulfilling the promise.

...Let's make sure the spark that has been ignited here in Keystone becomes a burning passion that is etched in our hearts.

We'll also need to share that energy with our colleagues—to get them just as excited as we have become this week to start putting in place the vision we have established here. Let's make sure we shape that passion with our comrades...

During this week I have heard skepticism about whether or not the Service will move forward....to fulfill the promise. Let me tell you, this is not going to be an easy thing to do, but I'm proud to say that I'm confident we will.

Neither I, nor the Directorate, can do this. Only you can! We the Directorate can help. I'm going to do my part. Can I count on you folks, each and every one of you, to do your part to fulfill the promise?...

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Director Urges Visionary Approach to “Fulfilling the Promise” (continued)

How do we make this week’s memorable moments and surge of energy last? Being married to an Appalachian boy for the last ten years, I know that there are many uses for a Mason jar. One is that when you experience something that you don’t want to end, just grab a Mason jar, capture the moment in the jar and seal the lid. When times get challenging, open the jar just a little and let that energy seep back into your heart.

I hope each of you has captured this week in your own Mason jar. As we return to our jobs, we all are going to need to open that jar quite a few times...to reenergize our passion, our commitment to doing the right thing.

Where do we go from here? You helped us answer that question this week. The feedback you provided on the recommendations contained in the *Fulfilling the Promise* report will guide the future of the Service. I have spoken to a number of you throughout the week, and I do realize that some of the recommendations pose large challenges.

Some of the help we need to meet these challenges has already been provided to us. We have a proud past to live up to, as Lynn Greenwalt eloquently reminded us. Some of the tools needed to fulfill the promise are already in place and we can thank our predecessors for that.

President [Theodore] Roosevelt gave us the first national wildlife refuge. Paul Kroegel served as our first refuge manager. “Ding” Darling, through his drawings, created awareness and concern about the plight of our nation’s natural heritage. J. Clark Salyer toured the prairies of the great Midwest, acquiring key habitats for wildlife. And Rachel Carson gave us the courage to stand up for what is right. They and many others have given us the tools, and more importantly the courage, to move forward.

Today the heroes the Service and the refuge system are counting on to carry on the work of our predecessors—to fulfill the promise we have made here—are sitting in this room...You are heroes, each and every one of you.

...We have quite a challenge ahead of us: To do our best to protect, conserve and restore our nation’s fish, wildlife, plants and habitats; to offer opportunities for the American public and visitors from around the world to experience these wildlands; and to foster a leadership that becomes the envy of everyone....Each of these challenges requires us to be visionary, to be risk-takers, and to recognize that if we work together we can accomplish anything...Through your efforts this week, we have built a platform to meet these challenges. I am honored and indeed privileged to help you succeed at accomplishing each of these.

I would like to share with you some final thoughts I have about each of the themes discussed here this week.

We are well on our way, but building the future leadership of the Service will take time. Dean Rundle noted that one of the most important things we can do for the Service is secure its future—recruit a bright, capable and diverse workforce that can meet the challenges of a changing world.

To do this we all have to be mentors, to make sure that our employees have positive experiences as Jerome Ford said. That means giving our colleagues opportunities for training, for facing new challenges, and for helping them grow into leadership positions. As Mamie Parker so passionately said, “If we make the deposit, we will get the return.”

I have heard a lot at this conference about the importance of visual symbols to enhance *esprit de corps*. The blue goose is one such symbol. Rachel Carson wrote, “If you travel much in the wilder sections of our country, sooner or later you’re likely to meet the sign of the flying goose—the emblem of the national wildlife refuges....Wherever you meet this sign, respect it. It means the land behind the sign has been dedicated by the American people to preserving, for themselves and their children, as much of our native wildlife as can be retained along with our modern civilization.”

I know one recommendation of this conference is to recognize the blue goose as the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Personally, I believe that the blue goose is an important symbol of our history and our future, not to replace the Service shield but to complement it.

Our National Wildlife Refuge System is the premier system of lands for wildlife conservation in the world. In the world! I still get shivers when I think about that statement. They serve, as Secretary Babbitt said, as anchors, as keystones of biological diversity.

Without reservation, we can say that these lands are here for conservation of wildlife. We must remain defenders of these lands and must work in concert with our adjacent landowners to make sure external threats are diminished and eliminated.

Many refuges are islands of wildness surrounded by a sea of humanity. To provide for the critters, the plants and the habitat on which they depend, we must continue reaching into our toolboxes and using those techniques necessary to maintain these wildlands. We must be even more innovative and creative in finding new approaches as well. And instead of seeking a “balance of nature,” we must recognize and work with the “dynamics of nature.”

...We have to understand the concepts of landscape ecology—and apply these concepts not only to our refuges but to the areas surrounding them....We must do our best to preserve all the cogs and wheels of the system. This is part of our commitment to “fulfilling the promise.”

I don’t find many people in this country who lack some level of appreciation for wildlife. And with our refuges, we have an excellent medium to foster and increase that appreciation.

We are becoming better communicators to the public about the importance of conserving wildlands and wild things. But we must...ensure that each and every one of us conveys that message to the public. Let’s embrace and seize all of the opportunities presented to us to do even more to excite others about the refuge system. Let’s do more to create awareness

Slides End Conference on a High Note

about the importance of clean air, clean water, of protecting our nation's natural heritage. Without a doubt, refuges offer a great opportunity to do that....

Let's also seize upon those members of the public who want to share—to volunteer their time and expertise to help us further the cause of our refuges, of fulfilling the promise.

Recently in a satellite broadcast, I talked about the many accomplishments that we in the Service experienced this past year. I also laid out my four top priorities for this year:

- strengthening the National Wildlife Refuge System;
- continuing to work towards an ecosystem approach;
- combating the spread of invasive species; and
- increasing our efforts to protect migratory birds.

While the first priority goes without saying, the National Wildlife Refuge System is crucial to achieving success in the other three.

Throughout this week, I have renewed acquaintances and met many new friends. I have sincerely appreciated your kind words, your support, and your excitement about our future. I received so many invitations to visit your refuges...that for the next two years I wouldn't have time to be in Washington, D.C.!

I am very thankful for your invitations and for your support. During the next year, in my travels around the country, I hope to take you up on as many of your invitations as possible....

We are nearly at the end of our conference. For a week we shared ideas and the great company of old and new friends. When we leave this room, we will part ways. Share what you have learned with your staffs. Engage them in fulfilling the promise. Heed Dan Ashe's good advice: "stay together." Although we are separated by distance we are united by vision. Stay together and I promise we will have more to celebrate.

Jim Clark started with 1,400 color slides submitted by 95 national wildlife refuges. Four months later, he had a 13-minute slide program called "Fulfilling the Promise," an inspiring, soaring and emotional tribute that brought the National Wildlife Refuge System Conference in Keystone, Colorado, to its official close.

Clark, the chief of the branch of wildlife training at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, was assisted by Greg Knadle of the Division of Refuges and Beth Jackson, also of NCTC, in making the final cut from among the myriad images of habitat, wildlife and people. The 1,400 original slide submissions were winnowed to 360, then to a final selection of 160.

Despite wide acclaim for the presentation, Clark said image ownership and a one-time only agreement for the musical soundtrack from Michael Gettle, who records for the Narada label, and John Archer of the group Checkfield, prevented copying and distribution.

Clark, who has pursued photography for 23 years, is the photographer-author of *West Virginia: The Allegheny Highlands*, by Westcliffe Publishers. Clark describes his first book as "a seasonal journey" through a part of his home state. He is presently at work on two more books and three articles and is a frequent contributor to *Outdoor Photographer* magazine.

*Ken Burton, Public Affairs,
Washington, DC*



Caribou at Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska. USFWS photo.

The Conference in Retrospect

*by Dan Ashe, Assistant Director for
Refuges and Wildlife*

When talking with someone from one of the mid-Atlantic states and the subject is “the Bay,” there is no need for further elaboration; they know you are speaking about the Chesapeake. Likewise, no clarification is necessary when speaking to a sports fan about “the Series.” If you work for the Service, the same is now true for “the Conference.” The October week in Keystone, Colorado, was an historic, defining event.

And what an event it was! From beginning to end, it was a spectacular celebration that made and renewed friendships, reinvigorated passions, and restored faith in our shared responsibilities. People cheered, laughed and cried. They wore their passion for the refuge system on their shirt sleeves (literally and figuratively) and they put that passion to work helping to shape a vision for the future of America’s National Wildlife Refuge System.

Because after all, that is what the conference was about—the future. The future of the refuge system; the future of the Service; and our future as an organization of conservation professionals. High stakes? You bet! A lot was riding on the success of the conference. And it was wonderfully successful!

Why? Like a good golf stroke, early preparation was a key. The wildlife, habitat, people and leadership workgroups did a marvelous job of laying the groundwork. The conference steering committee made sure that the logistics and organization were fastidious and no detail was left unconsidered. This early preparation set the stage for a solid strike at the ball, and the conference participants stepped up and teed off.



Let’s stay together. Assistant Director for Refuges and Wildlife Dan Ashe helped to wrap up the conference on its final day. Photo by Ryan Hagerty.

Attendance and performance at the workgroup sessions were impressive. It was clear that everyone came prepared and ready to work. And it didn’t matter whether an individual was from Refuges, Ecological Services, Federal Aid, Law Enforcement or Fisheries. They all brought one thing in common: passion for the future of America’s National Wildlife Refuge System.

As a result of the conference, the ball has been hit long, right down the middle of the fairway. So what club do we play next? And do we shoot for the green or lay the ball up? Once the Directorate approves the final *Fulfilling the Promise* document, those crucial decisions will be in the hands of the implementation team, which will begin work this winter (*see next page for a list of team members*).

Under my direction, and with the highly capable support of the Division of Refuges, this team of 14 people will lead our effort to fulfill the promise. But that effort will require many more than 14 pairs of hands on the oars, and the energy and enthusiasm of many more minds. Each of us must commit ourselves to fulfill the promise in our own way and through our own actions.

So whether you attended the conference or not, you can play a part in shaping and implementing our shared vision for the refuge system. Keep the *Promise* document on your desk and in your heart. If you attended the conference, share the passion and promise of Keystone with your staff and colleagues who were not able to attend.

Remember how you felt as Lynn Greenwalt ended his speech with the words, “I wish I was young again, because I would join you.” Make everyone you touch feel the pride, passion and energy that filled us all as Lynn walked from the stage. If you have ideas or time to volunteer, contact a member of the Implementation Team and ask them how you can help.

The conference was a defining event; certainly for me personally, but I think also for the more than 800 others who were fortunate to be there. Our challenge is to extend that experience by tenfold, so that it reaches and invigorates every Service employee.

The conference was not an end. It was a beginning of a long journey. We have begun to outline our vision of what America’s National Wildlife Refuge System can be—the promise. Fulfilling that promise will be my priority in working with the implementation team (the “Refuge Promise Team”). But it must also be the personal and collective responsibility of all Service employees.

The Reverend Jesse Jackson asks people to “keep hope alive.” We must keep the promise of Keystone alive and make sure that the conference does not become just a great memory, but the beginning of a great and successful journey.

If we stay together and stay committed throughout this journey we can make it so!

Building Beyond the Keystone Majesty

by Rick Coleman, Chief, Division of Refuges

The National Wildlife Refuge System Conference in Keystone, Colorado, was meant to be both an awesome celebration of 95 years of the refuge system and a dramatic collaborative commitment to an even brighter future. We achieved both. Now comes the hard part: reaching for that future with all hands stretching in the same direction and supporting each other.

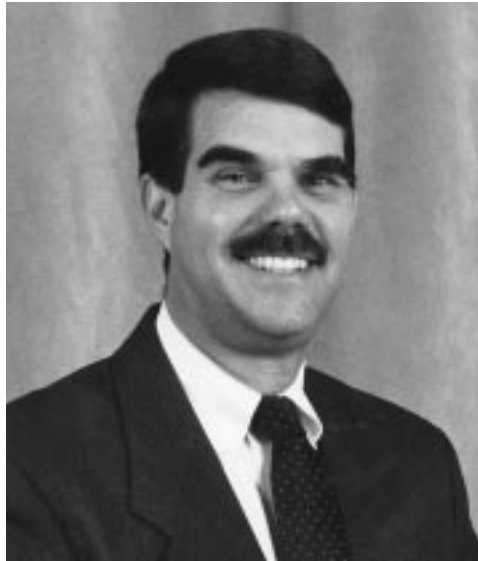
Back at our offices, we still sense the synergy and supportive passion that was so apparent at the conference. Why is it lasting? Because we had that same feeling before the conference. We knew it, felt it and relied on it throughout our careers.

Others came to realize the intensity of this feeling at the conference; many commented that they now have a better understanding of what it feels like to “have a passion for refuges.” It is akin to the magnetic field of our planet: a natural mystery often overlooked, yet always there to confidently guide us when we are unsure about our way, our future.

What’s next to reach for that future? The four workgroups that developed our collective vision, the *Fulfilling the Promise* report, are now reviewing comments received from all of you and our partners. After the workgroups refine our recommendations, an editing team led by Don Hultman will prepare the final draft and provide it to the Director for review in February. At their meeting in March, the entire Directorate will make decisions on the final *Fulfilling the Promise* report.

The workgroups also will soon provide guidance to the implementation team to ensure that team understands the background and intent of the report.

The implementation team will track and periodically report on progress made in carrying out the recommendations of *Fulfilling the Promise*. The Division of Refuges will remain fully engaged throughout this process. To maximize our focus and accomplishments, the Division of Refuges is carefully assessing *Fulfilling the Promise* recommendations in relation to other initiatives underway, such as Refuge Improvement Act implementation and the Biological Needs Assessment.



*Refuges Division Chief Rick Coleman.
Photo by Tami Heilemann.*

Implementation also requires systemwide focus and support, from all regions and field stations, to a degree never before achieved. To get there, each and every region and field station will need to fully understand and believe in the ultimate benefits of *Fulfilling the Promise*. The conference was a great first step toward that understanding, but we need to continue our dialogue to sustain our commitment and achieve our goals. The Directorate, the PARs, and the Division of Refuges will have key roles in this vital communication.

Never before have we faced such a tremendous challenge: to dare ourselves to dream the dream, and then to fulfill that dream! We glance back at volumes of studies, task force reports, and other management reviews that challenged the status quo, yet fell far short of really making a meaningful difference for the refuge system. Despite our best intentions, it is very hard to steer a mighty organization on a new course.

But it is not impossible! We understood that challenge as we built a bonfire of passion and support in Keystone. We are gaining all the momentum possible toward our goals. We are resolute that this time all were involved and all have a reason to care. We will use our passion and the new awareness in others to fulfill the full promise of the National Wildlife Refuge System!

Implementing the Promise: Where It Goes from Here

Once the vision document is in final draft, it will be presented to the Service Directorate for approval, most likely at their March meeting. The “Refuge Promise Team,”—really all of us in Refuges and the Service—will then begin the implementation process. As announced at the conference, implementation team members include:

Dan Ashe, AD, Refuges and Wildlife, Washington, DC (Chair)

Carolyn Bohan, PAR, Portland, Oregon

Dean Rundle, Manager, San Diego NWR Complex, California

Dom Ciccone, PAR, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Deborah Holle, Manager, Balcones Canyonlands NWR, Texas

Nita Fuller, PAR, Twin Cities, Minnesota

Marguerite Hills, Manager, Cypress Creek NWR, Illinois

Dave Heffernan, PAR, Atlanta, Georgia

John Taylor, Manager, Tennessee NWR, Tennessee

To Be Announced, PAR, Hadley, Massachusetts

Jan Taylor, Zone Biologist, Great Bay NWR, New Hampshire

Ken McDermond, PAR, Denver, Colorado

Mike Blenden, Manager, Monte Vista/Alamosa NWR, Colorado

Todd Logan, PAR, Anchorage, Alaska

Vernon Byrd, Biologist, Alaska Maritime NWR, Alaska

Acknowledgments

This conference would not have been possible without the dedication and thoughtfulness of many people, those in front of the scenes—the steering committee, workgroup members, the Director and Directorate, and those behind the scenes—conference management.

Conference and Report Steering Committee

The steering committee worked for more than a year planning the conference. The committee includes representatives from every region and from the Division of Refuges in Washington. With their vision the conference grew from a Project Leaders Meeting to a National Wildlife Refuge System Conference that will set a future course for the National Wildlife Refuge System through our centennial and beyond.

Richard Coleman, Chief, Division of Refuges, Washington DC (Co-chair)

John Doebel, Assistant Regional Director, Portland, Oregon (Co-chair)

Aaron Archibeque, Manager, Togiak NWR, Alaska

Jim Clark, Branch Chief-Division of Wildlife Training, NCTC, West Virginia

Dave Heffernan, Refuge Supervisor, Atlanta, Georgia

Deborah Holle, Manager, Balcones Canyonlands NWR, Texas

Don Hultman, Deputy Chief, Division of Refuges, Washington, DC

Janet Kennedy, Deputy Manager, Great Meadows NWR, Massachusetts (Facilitator)

Anne Marie LaRosa, Manager, Seedskaadee NWR, Wyoming

John Stasko, Manager, Back Bay NWR, Virginia

Tom Stewart, Manager, Klamath Basin NWR Complex, California/Oregon

Janet Tennyson, Outreach Coordinator, Division of Refuges, Washington, DC

Terry Villanueva, Refuge Manager/Conference Coordinator, Division of Refuges, Washington, DC

The following are the workgroups on the four topic areas—*wildlife, habitat, people and leadership*—for the *Fulfilling the Promise* document. We are indebted to them for their hard work and dedication. In addition, Management Systems International (MSI) provided professional facilitation to the workgroups and often went above and beyond the scope of their work to ensure the process remained on track.

Wildlife workgroup

David Allen, Regional Director, Anchorage, Alaska (Chair)

Kristine Askerooth, Biologist, Tewaukon NWR, North Dakota

**Vernon Byrd*, Biologist, Alaska Maritime NWR, Alaska

Marc Epstein, Biologist, Merritt Island NWR, Florida

John Gallegos, Biologist, Back Bay NWR, Virginia

**Kathy Granillo*, Biologist, Refuges, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Chuck Hunter, Biologist, Refuges and Wildlife, Atlanta, Georgia

Jim Larson, Biologist, King Salmon Fisheries Resource Office, Alaska

Ken McDermond, Refuge Manager, Division of Refuges, Washington, DC

**Fred Pavaglio*, Biologist, Refuges, Portland, Oregon

Mike Tansy, Manager, Seney NWR, Michigan

Pam Thiel, Supervisor, LaCrosse Fisheries Assistance Office, Wisconsin

Steering Committee Liaisons:
A. Archibeque and J. Doebel

MSI Facilitator: *Janet Tuthill*

Habitat workgroup

Sam Hamilton, Regional Director, Atlanta, Georgia (Chair)

Tom Busiahn, Supervisor, Ashland Fisheries Assistance Office, Wisconsin

**Steve Gard*, Manager, Mississippi Wetland Management District, Mississippi

Wayne King, Regional Biologist, Refuges, Denver, Colorado

Andy Loranger, Manager, Texas Chenier Plain NWR, Texas

Edward Merritt, Manager, Innoko NWR, Alaska

Dave Paullin, Refuge Supervisor, Sacramento, California

Dan Petit, Biologist, Office of Migratory Bird Management, Washington, DC

**Dan Stinnett*, Chief, Partners for Fish and Wildlife, Twin Cities, Minnesota

Mark Sweeny, Manager, Moosehorn NWR Complex, Maine

**Jan Taylor*, Regional Field Biologist, Division of Refuges, Hadley, Massachusetts

John Taylor, Manager, Tennessee NWR, Tennessee

**Amy Wing*, Ecologist, Division of Refuges, Washington, DC

Steering Committee Liaisons:
**D. Hultman and J. Stasko*

MSI Facilitator: *Ed Comstock*

People workgroup

Ron Lambertson, Regional Director,
Hadley, Massachusetts (Chair)

Mike Blenden, Manager,
Alamosa-Monte Vista NWR, Colorado

George Constantino, Chief, Division of
Refuges, Anchorage, Alaska

Lou Hinds, Manager,
“Ding” Darling NWR, Florida

**Barbara Maxfield*, Public Information
Specialist, Refuges/ES, Pacific Islands

Mamie Parker, Special Assistant to the
Deputy Director, Washington, DC

**Allyson Rowell*, Program Analyst, Division
of Refuges, Washington, DC

Elizabeth Slown, Federal Aid, Albuquerque,
New Mexico

Angela Tracy, Outdoor Recreation Planner,
Chincoteague NWR, Virginia

**Robin Will*, Outdoor Recreation Planner,
St. Marks NWR, Florida

Dave Wiseman, Manager,
National Bison Range, Montana

**Tom Worthington*, Chief, Branch of Visitor
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**A. LaRosa and *J. Tennyson*

MSI Facilitator: Judith Light

Leadership workgroup

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Maggie Anderson, Manager,
Agassiz NWR, Minnesota

Larry Ditto, Manager,
Lower Rio Grand NWR, Texas

Mike Elkins, Special Agent, Division of Law
Enforcement, Atlanta, Georgia

Harris Hoistad, Manager, Valley City
WMD, North Dakota

Matt Kerschbaum, Refuge Supervisor,
Twin Cities, Minnesota

John Martin, Manager,
Alaska Maritime NWR, Alaska

Skippy Reeves, Manager,
Okefenokee NWR, Georgia

**Dean Rundle*, Manager,
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John Schroer, Manager,
Chincoteague NWR, Virginia

Terry Villanueva, Refuge
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D. Holle and T. Stewart

MSI Facilitator: *Larry Cooley*

**denotes main authors, although workgroup
members provided extensive review and
suggested wording, additions and deletions*

Conference Management

We thank those who gave of their time
working behind the scenes to carry out those
tasks necessary to support the conference in
so many ways: registration, delivering
messages, answering the phone, putting up
signs, photocopying, assuring that rooms
were set as needed to carry out the
business of the conference, and providing
radio support.

John Arnold, Great Swamp NWR,
New Jersey

Diana Boehning, CGS, Denver, Colorado

Joe Brown, U.S. Park Police,
National Park Service

Jean Clemens, Regional Office, Denver,
Colorado

Cathleen DeBerry, CGS, Denver, Colorado

Tina Dobrinsky, Division of Refuges,
Washington, DC

Larry Gamble, Regional Office,
Denver, Colorado

Tom Foote, U.S. Park Police,
National Park Service

Jim Gasser, Conference Meeting Planner,
National Park Service

Carol Griner, Albuquerque Regional Office

Bill Hutchinson, Regional Office, Twin
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Mike Ielmini, Division of Refuges,
Washington, DC

Terri Jackson, Division of Refuges,
Washington, DC

Caryl Jeffery, Secretary for John Rogers,
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Kirk Lambert, Regional Office,
Portland, Oregon

Elizabeth Madden, Charles M. Russell
NWR, Montana

Gina Martinez, Regional Office,
Hadley, Massachusetts

Debbie McCrensky, Division of Refuges,
Washington, DC

Kay McCutchen, Carolina Sandhills NWR,
South Carolina

Sue McDonald, Minnesota Valley NWR,
Minnesota

Nancy Morrissey,
Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR, Texas

Jackie Moseley, Regional Office,
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Maggie O'Connell,
Okefenokee NWR, Georgia

Kim Randall, Catahoula NWR, Louisiana

Rene Robichaud, Imperial NWR, Arizona

Holly Robinson, Regional Office,
Hadley, Massachusetts

June Rudolech, Regional Office,
Anchorage, Alaska

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Doug Canfield, NCTC,
Shepherdstown, West Virginia

Dave Cooper, NCTC, Shepherdstown,
West Virginia

Ryan Hagerty, NCTC, Shepherdstown,
West Virginia

Jorin Hood

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Don Hultman
Ken Grannemann
Greg Siekaniec
Jon Andrew

Contracting Support

Denver Regional Office, CGS:
Diana Boehning
Howard Cole
Tracie Richardson

Conference Registration

Regional Conference Registration
Coordinators assisted by maintaining
registration records and fielding
innumerable questions from conference
delegates:

Kirk Lambert, Portland, Oregon

Pam Rumage, Sacramento, California

Carol Griner, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Tom Worthington, Twin Cities, Minnesota

Mike McMinn, *Ed Loth*, Atlanta, Georgia

Gina Martinez, Hadley, Massachusetts

Tom Locke, Denver, Colorado

Kathryn Hermann, *George Constantino*,
Anchorage, Alaska

Tina Dobrinsky, Washington, DC

Division of Refuges

Many others in the Division of Refuges in
Washington, DC, also assisted with
preparations for the conference.



Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge.
Photo: *Debbie McCrensky*.

“The conference of National Wildlife Refuge System employees at Keystone was a highly valuable meeting. It dealt with important issues concerning management of refuges to meet the needs of wildlife, their habitats and people. The interchange between refuge staff, with Service leaders, and with stakeholders has laid a strong foundation for the future of the refuge system.”

**Rollin D. Sparrowe, CARE/President,
Wildlife Management Institute**

“The conference was the greatest thing that could have happened—a true milestone—for the refuge system, and for all of us involved with it. I just can’t express how much this meant to me personally and I know of many others who feel the same.”

**Andy Loranger, Manager, Anahuac NWR,
Anahuac, Texas**



Lake Woodruff National Wildlife Refuge. Photo: John and Karen Hollingsworth.

“What a grand event it was! I don’t think I’ve ever been in a group of more than 800 people where literally everyone was eager to meet everyone else. In particular, I was struck by just how proud each person was to say where they came from. From the Kenai Peninsula to the Everglades, every refuge manager showed a distinct pride in telling his or her story. On top of that, interesting speakers recharged many batteries. A special thanks for the invitation!”

**Margaret Coon, Director, Government Relations,
The Nature Conservancy**

“This conference was one of the most extraordinary events—in the best sense of the word—in my 23 years in the Service. To see this many people from every other Service program, brought together in an inspiring setting for the common goal of planning the future of our national wildlife refuge system, gave me a renewed sense of pride in what the Service is all about.”

**Marshall Jones, Assistant Director-
International Affairs, Washington, DC**

“...I was particularly impressed with the enthusiasm and creativity expressed during the ‘Fulfilling the Promise’ workshop sessions... On a personal level, I left the conference with a deeper understanding of and respect for the refuge system’s history and its significance for the American people. All in all, it was a wonderful experience!”

**Barbara Maxfield, Public Information
Specialist, Pacific Islands Ecosystem**

“Defenders of Wildlife will remember our participation in the refuge conference as both useful and inspirational. The dedication of the Fish & Wildlife Service to building a brighter future for the refuge system, from the Director on down, shone through. We are confident the event will mark an important turning point in the history of the refuge system and of wildlife conservation. Our heartfelt congratulations.”

**Robert Dewey, Director, Habitat Conservation,
Defenders of Wildlife**

It's All About Saving the Dirt

No matter how many different ways we confront the exciting challenges that face the National Wildlife Refuge System, I think the most important summary of our mission was passed along to us by former Service Director Lynn Greenwalt at our conference in Keystone: "Save the dirt."

Whatever way we wish to approach all that faces us in the months and years ahead, it all comes back to those three words. Lynn thought the phrase might not be that eloquent. I disagree. I think the phrase is wonderfully meaningful, and it is one which we should never forget.

One of my top priorities for 1999 is to help save some dirt by presiding over the strengthening of the National Wildlife Refuge System. My other three priorities—working toward an ecosystem approach to conservation, fighting the spread of invasive species and increasing efforts to protect migratory birds—all depend in large measure on the strength of the refuge system.

As the population of the United States continues to grow, the pressures on national wildlife refuges will increase. People require space to live, space to work, and space to get to and from both.

That pressure will place us in a very special position—because those same people also will want another kind of space, the kind that refuges provide, that gives them some breathing room between the pressures of living and working.

Beginning with Theodore Roosevelt in 1903, every generation of Americans has let it be known that they treasure these open, wild places and the life that thrives there. Americans have a special feeling—a special link—to the land and to wildlife. Our

responsibility is huge: we have been entrusted to keep all of that intact and to pass it along to yet another generation.

I think we're in a position today to do that more effectively than we have ever done before.

The National Wildlife Refuge System has always had a strong constituency. With the C.A.R.E. group and with refuge support groups, we're just seeing the very beginnings of a major mobilization. Volunteers already account for 20 percent of all the work done in the refuge system, donating more than 1.5 million hours of their time and saving the taxpayers millions of dollars.

Make no mistake about *Fulfilling the Promise*. I can sign off on memos and guidelines and policies and we can all schedule meetings and push ahead with all the machinery that it takes to get the job done. But while we're doing all of that, take some time to read about Aldo Leopold and Teddy Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot, about Franklin Roosevelt and Rachel Carson and Winston Churchill, not for what each did for conservation, although several did a great deal.

Read them for the inspiration. It is not nearly as important to tell ourselves that we face large challenges as it is for each of us to find the large answers.

The conservation movement in the United States has had its share of rocky and difficult times. But the hard work got done. It is still being done. It got done because people with dreams persevered and in many instances, overcame apathy, adversity and just plain bad times.

In 1999, we'll be putting the finishing touches on the *Fulfilling the Promise* document, an

impressive body of work written by those of you closest to the refuge system. It will be a guide and map to carry the refuge system into the 21st century. It will represent one of the most ambitious blueprints the Service has ever undertaken, designed to help the world's largest network of public lands set aside exclusively for wildlife to become better still.

We've made real progress in the last few years. The refuge system enjoys wide and deep support in the Congress. That support is duplicated across the country by hunters, anglers, birdwatchers, photographers, boaters, hikers and those who seek out wildlife refuges for their solitude.

"I am certain," said John F. Kennedy, "that after the dust of centuries has passed over our cities, we will be remembered not for victories or defeats in battle or in politics, but for our contribution to the human spirit."

I think our work has a lot to do with how we will be remembered because it has a lot to do with the human spirit. Because the spirit, like the branches and leaves of a tree, is enriched by experiencing the earth's natural splendor.

So Lynn was right. It is, after all, about saving the dirt.



Rachel F. Levin

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